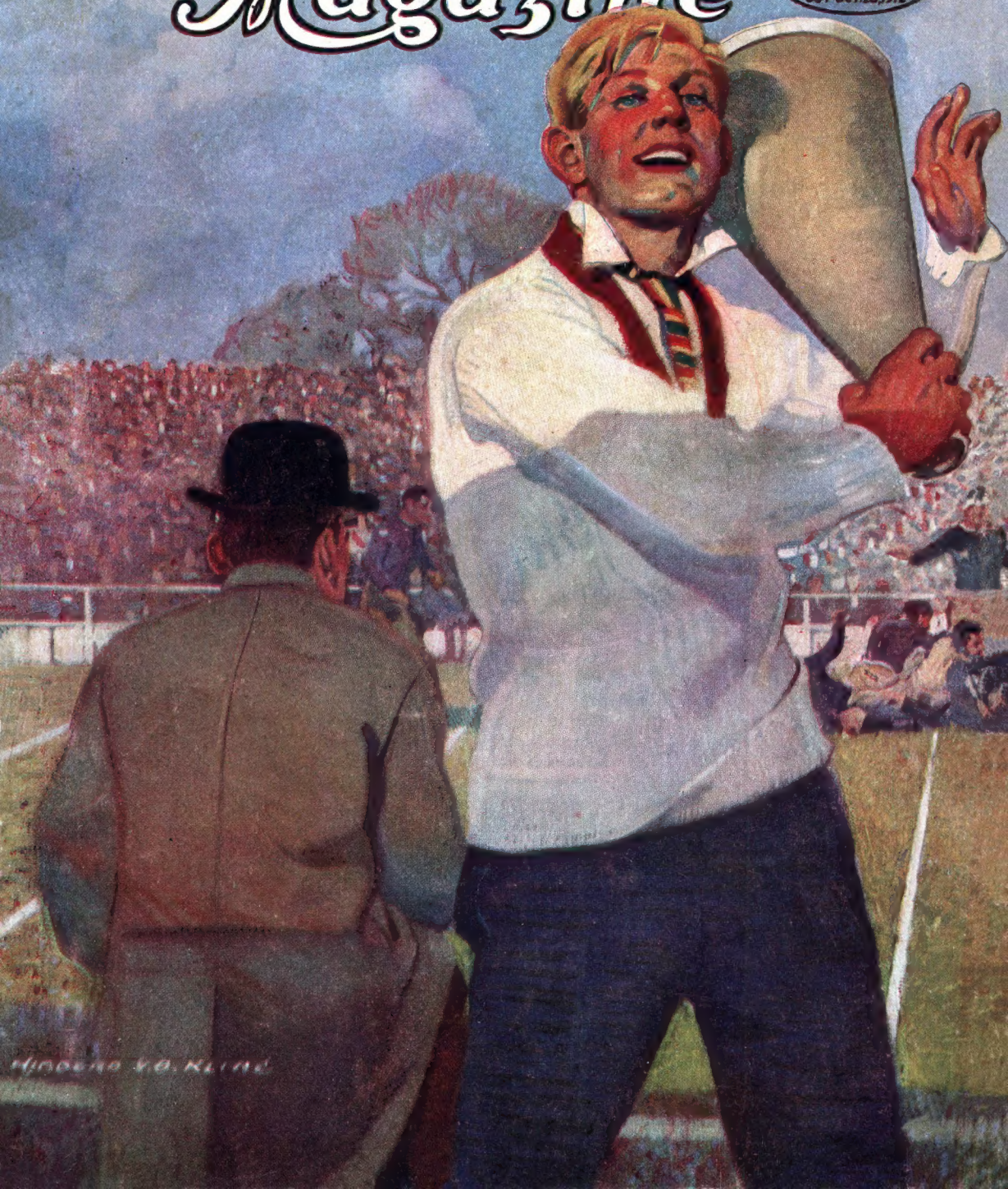


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No. 3, Vol. 26 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

NOVEMBER
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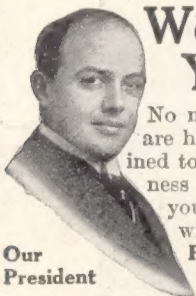


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BY BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR AND ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE

MONTH-END

EDITION

VOLUME XXVI

NUMBER 3

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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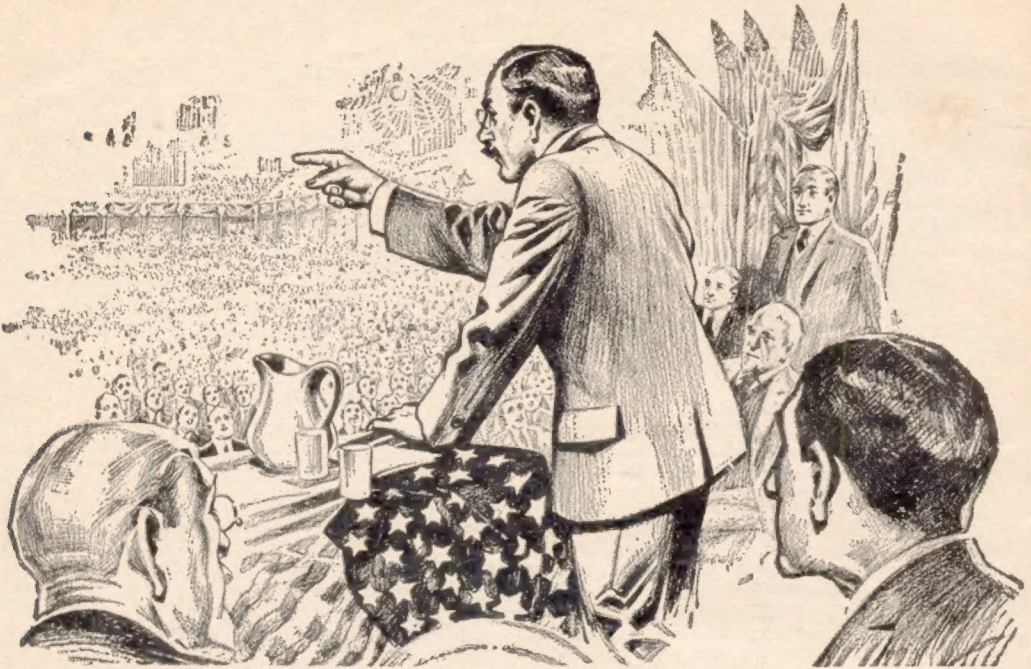
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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXVI.

NOVEMBER 15, 1912.

No. 3.

Flying U Ranch

By B. M. Bower

Author of "Chip of the Flying U," "Lonesome Land," Etc.

Old friends—it is good to meet them again. Chip and Weary, and Happy Jack and Patsy and Cadwolloper—old friends that we had grown to love and that we haven't heard a word about for a long time. Perhaps Bower has been waiting for a big happening on the ranch. It happened all right—the invasion of the Flying U Ranch by the pestiferous sheepmen, while the Old Man was away, and the younger, more sanguinary spirits of the ranch had to grapple with the invaders tactfully or otherwise as became their several tempers. You will hear more about the Flying U Ranch in the next POPULAR.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

ANDY GREEN, that honest-eyed young man whom every one loved, and whom not a man believed save when he was indulging his love for more or less fantastic flights of the imagination, pulled up on the brow of Flying U Coulee, and stared somberly at the picture spread below him. On the porch of the White House the hammock swung gently under the weight of the Little Doctor, who pushed her slipper toe mechanically against a post support at regular intervals while she read—a magazine, he judged from the size and shape of it. On the steps the Kid was crawling laboriously upward, only to descend again quite as laboriously when he attained the top. One of the boys was just emerging from the blacksmith shop;

from the build of him Andy knew it must be either Weary or Irish, though it would take a much closer observation, and some familiarity with the two, to identify the man more exactly. In the corral was a swirl of horses and an overhanging cloud of dust, with two or three figures discernible in the midst, and away in the little pasture two other figures were galloping after a fleeing dozen of horses. While he looked, old Patsy came out of the mess house and went, with flapping, flour-sack apron, to the woodpile.

Peaceful it was, and homelike and contentedly prosperous, a little world tucked away in its hills, with its own little triumphs and defeats, its own heartaches and rejoicings; a lucky little world, because its triumphs had been satisfying, its defeats small, its heartaches brief, and its rejoicings untainted

with harassment or guilt. Yet Andy stared down upon it with a frown, and when he twitched the reins and began the descent he sighed impatiently.

Past the stable he rode with scarcely a glance toward Weary, who shouted "Hello!" at him from the corral. Through the big gate and up the trail to the White House, and straight to the porch where the Little Doctor flipped a leaf of her magazine and glanced at him with a smile, and the Kid turned his plump body upon the middle step, and wrinkled his nose in a four-toothed smile of recognition while he threw out an arm in welcome, and made a wabbling effort to get upon his feet.

Andy smiled at the Kid, but his smile did not reach his eyes, and it faded almost immediately from his lips. He glanced at the Little Doctor, and sent his horse past the steps and the Kid, and close to the railing, so that he could lean and toss the mail into the Little Doctor's lap. There was a yellow envelope among the letters, and her fingers singled it out curiously. Andy folded his hands upon the saddle horn and watched her.

"Must be from J. G.," guessed the Little Doctor, inserting a slim finger under the badly sealed flap. "I've been wondering if he wasn't almost homesick enough to—— *Baby!* He's right between your horse's legs," Andy! Oh-h—baby boy, what won't you do next?" She scattered letters and papers from her lap, and flew to the rescue. "Will he kick, Andy? You little ruffian——" She held out her arms coaxingly from the top of the steps, and her face, Andy saw when he looked at her, had lost some of its color.

"The horse is quiet enough," he reassured her, "but at the same time I wouldn't hand him out as a plaything for a kid." He leaned cautiously, and peered backward.

"Oh—did you *ever* see such a child! Come to mother, baby!" Her voice was becoming strained.

The Kid, wrinkling his nose and jabbering unintelligibly at her so that his four tiny teeth showed in his pink mouth, moved farther backward, and

sat down violently under the horse's sweat-roughened belly. He wriggled around so that he faced forward, reached out gleefully, caught the front fetlocks, and cried "Dup!" while he pulled. The Little Doctor turned white.

"He's all right," soothed Andy, and, leaning with a twist of his slim body, caught the Kid firmly by the back of his pink dress, and lifted him clear of danger. He came up with a red face and a smile, tossed the Kid into the eager arms of the Little Doctor, and soothed his horse with soft words and a series of little slaps upon the neck. He was breathing unevenly, because the Kid had really been in rather a ticklish position, but the Little Doctor had her face hidden on the baby's neck, and did not see.

"Where's Chip?" Andy turned to ride back to the stable. He glanced toward the telegram lying on the floor of the porch, and from it to the young woman trying to laugh away her trembling while she scolded adoringly her adventurous man-child. He was about to speak again, but thought better of it, and sighed.

"Down at the stables somewhere—I don't know really. The boys will tell you. Mother's baby *mustn't* touch the naughty horses. Naughty horses *hurt* mother's baby! Make him cry——"

Andy gave her a long glance which had in it something of pity, and rode away. He knew what was in that telegram, for the agent had told him when he hunted him up at Rusty Brown's and gave it to him, and the horse of Andy bore mute testimony to the speed with which he had brought it to the ranch. Not until he had reached the coulee had he slackened his pace. He decided, after that glance, that he would not remind her that she had not read the telegram; instead he thought he ought to find Chip immediately.

Chip was rummaging after something in the storehouse, and when Andy saw him there he dismounted and stood blotting out the light from the doorway. Chip looked up, said "Hello!" carelessly, and flung an old slicker aside that he might search beneath it. "Back

early, aren't you?" he asked, for sake of saying something.

Andy's attitude was not as casual as he would have had it. "Say, maybe you better go on up to the house," he began diffidently. "I guess your wife wants to see yuh, maybe."

"Just as a good wife should," grinned Chip. "What's the matter? Kid fall off the porch?"

"N-o-o; I brought out a wire from Chicago. It's from a doctor there—some hospital. The—'Old Man' got hurt. One of them cussed automobiles knocked him down. They want you to come."

Chip had straightened, and was looking at Andy blankly. "If you're just trying——"

"Honest," Andy asserted, and flushed a little. "I'll go tell some one to catch up the team—you'll want to catch that eleven-twenty, I take it." He added, as Chip went by him hastily: "I had the agent wire for sleeper berths on the eleven-twenty, so——"

"Thanks! Yes, you have the team caught up, Andy. Much obliged." Chip was already well on his way to the house.

Andy waited till he saw the Little Doctor come hurriedly to the end of the porch overlooking the pathway, with the telegram fluttering in her fingers, and then led his horse down through the gate and to the stable. He yanked the saddle off, turned the tired horse into a stall, and went on to the corral, where he leaned elbows on a warped rail and peered through at the turmoil within. Close beside him stood Weary, with his loop dragging beside him, waiting for a chance to throw it over the head of a buckskin three-year-old with black mane and tail.

"Get in here and take a hand, why don't you?" Weary bantered, his eye on the buckskin. "Good chance to make a rep for yourself, Andy. Gawd greased that buckskin—he sure can slide out from under a rope as easy——" He broke off to flip the loop dexterously forward, had the doubtful pleasure of seeing the buckskin dodge backward so that the loop barely flicked him on the

nose, and drew in his rope disgustedly. "Come on, Andy—my hands are up in the air; I can't land him—that's the fourth throw."

Andy's interest in the buckskin, however, was scant. His face was sober, his whole attitude one of extreme dejection.

"You got the tummyache?" Pink inquired facetiously, moving around so that he got a fair look at his face.

"Naw—his girl's went back on him!" Happy Jack put in, coiling his rope as he came up.

"Oh, shut up!" Andy's voice was sharp with trouble. "Boys—the Old Man's—well, he's likely dead by this time. I brought out a telegram——"

"Go on!" Pink's eyes widened incredulously. "Don't you try *that* kind of a load, Andy Green, or I'll just about hand——"

"Oh, you fellows make me *sick*!" Andy took his elbows off the rail, and stood straight. "The telegram's up at the house—go and read it yourselves, then!"

The three stared after him doubtfully, fear struggling with the caution born of much experience.

"He don't act, to me, like he was putting up a josh," Weary stated uneasily, after a minute of silence. "Run up to the house and find out, Cadwolloper. The Old Man—oh, good Lord!" The tan on Weary's face took a lighter tinge. "Scoot—it won't take but a minute to find out for sure. Go on, Pink!"

"So help me Josephine, I'll kill that same Andy Green if he's lied about it," Pink declared, while he climbed the fence.

In three minutes he was back, and his face confirmed the bad news before he said a word. Their eyes besought him for details, and he gave them jerkily: "Automobile run over him. He ain't dead, but they think——" Chip and the Little Doctor are going to catch the night train. You go haze in the team, Happy. And give 'em a feed of oats, Chip said."

Irish and Big Medicine, seeing the three standing together there and sensing, perhaps, something unusual, came

up and heard the news in stunned silence. Andy, forgetting his pique at their first disbelief, came forlornly back and stood with them.

The Old Man—the thing could not be true! To every man of them his presence, conjured by the impending tragedy, was almost a palpable thing. His stocky figure seemed almost to stand in their midst; he looked at them with his whimsical eyes, which had the radiating crow's-feet of age, humor, and habitual squinting against sun and wind; the bald spot on his head, the wrinkled shirt collar which seldom knew a tie, the carpet slippers, which were his favorite footgear because they were kind to his bunions, his husky voice, good-naturedly complaining, were all poignantly real to them at that moment. Then Irish thought of him lying maimed, dying, perhaps, in a far-off hospital among strangers, and swore.

"If he's got to go—it oughta be here, where folks know him, and—where he knows——" Irish was not accustomed to giving voice to his deeper feelings, and he blundered awkwardly over it.

"I never did go much on them darned hospitals, anyway," Weary observed gloomily. "He oughta be home where folks can look after him. Mamma! It sure is a fright!"

"I betche Chip and the Little Doctor won't git there in time," Happy Jack predicted, with his usual pessimism. "The Old Man's gittin' old——"

"He ain't but fifty-two; yuh call *that* old, consarn yuh? He's younger right now than you'll be when you're forty."

"Countess is going along, too, so she can ride herd on the Kid," Pink informed them. "I heard the Little Doctor tell her to pack up, and never mind if she did have her bread sponge all set. Countess seemed to think her bread was a darned sight more important than the Old Man—that's the way with women. They'll pass up——"

"Well, by golly, I like to see a woman take some interest in her own affairs," Slim defended. "What they packin' up for, and where they goin'?" Slim had just ridden up to the group in time to overhear Pink's criticism.

They told him the news, and Slim swallowed twice, said "By golly!" quite huskily, and then rode slowly away with his head bowed. He had worked for the Flying U when it was strictly a bachelor outfit, and with the tenacity of slow minds he held J. G. Whitmore, his beloved "Old Man," as but a degree lower than that mysterious power which made the sun to shine—and, if the truth were known, he had accepted him as very nearly as eternal. His loyalty adjusted everything to the interests of the Flying U. That the Old Man could die—the possibility stunned him.

They were a sorry company that gathered that night around the long table with its mottled oilcloth covering, and the benches polished to a glasslike smoothness with their own vigorous bodies. They did not talk much about the Old Man; indeed, they came no nearer the subject than to ask Weary if he were going to drive the team in to Dry Lake.

They did not talk much about anything, for that matter; even the knives and forks seemed to share the general depression of spirits, and failed to give forth the cheerful clatter which was a daily accompaniment of meals in that room.

Old Patsy—he who had cooked for J. G. Whitmore when Flying U Coulee was a wilderness and the brand yet unrecorded and the irons unmade—Patsy lumbered heavily about the room, and could not find his dishcloth when it was squeezed tight in one great, fat hand, and started to pour coffee from the teakettle.

"Py cosh, I vould kill der fool vot made der first von of der automo-beels, yet!" he exclaimed unexpectedly, after a long silence, and cast his pipe vindictively toward his bunk in one corner.

The Happy Family looked around at him, then understandingly at one another.

"Same here, Patsy," Jack Bates agreed. "What they want of the infernal things when the country's full uh good horses, gits *me*."

"So some yahoo with just sense

to put goggles on to cover up his fool face can run over folks he ain't good enough to speak to, by cripes!" Big Medicine glared aggressively up and down the table.

Weary got up suddenly and went out, and Slim followed him, though his supper was half uneaten.

"This is goin' to be hard on the Little Doctor; only brother she's got," they heard Happy Jack point out unnecessarily, and Weary, the equable, was guilty of slamming the door so that the whole building shook, by way of demonstrating his dislike of speech upon the subject.

They were a sorry company who waved hands at the Little Doctor and the Kid and the Countess, just when the afterglow of a red sunset was merging into the vague, purple shadows of coming dusk. They stood silent, for the most part, and let them go without the usual facetious advice to "Be good to yourselves," and to Chip to keep out of jail if he could. There must have been something very wistful in their faces, for the Little Doctor smiled bravely down upon them from the buggy seat, and lifted up the Kid for his endearing, four-toothed smile and an ecstatic "By!" accompanied by a vigorous flopping of hands which included them all.

"We'll telegraph, first thing, boys," the Little Doctor called back as the rig chucked into the pebbly creek crossing. "We'll keep you posted, and I'll write all the particulars as soon as I can. Don't think the worst—unless you have to. I don't." She smiled again, and waved her hand hastily because of the Kid's contortions; and though the smile had tears close behind it—and though her voice was tremulous in spite of herself, the Happy Family took heart from her courage, and waved their hats gravely, and smiled back as best they could.

"There's a lot uh cake you boys might just as well eat up," the Countess called belatedly. "It'll all dry out if yuh don't—and there ain't no use wastin' it—and there's two lemon pies in the brown cupboard, and what under the shinin' sun——" The wheels bumped violently

against a rock, and the Happy Family heard no more.

CHAPTER II.

On the third day after, the Happy Family decided that there should be a telegram from Chicago; and since that day was Sunday, the whole bunch of them rode in to Dry Lake. They had not discussed the impending tragedy very much, but they were an exceedingly Unhappy Family nevertheless, and Flying U Coulee was a place of gloom. They were, therefore, not averse to leaving it behind them for a few hours, riding where every stick and stone did not remind them of the Old Man.

In Dry Lake was the message, brief but heartening:

J. G. still alive. Hurt pretty bad, but some hopes.

So they left the station with lighter spirits, rode to the hotel, tied their horses to the long hitching pole there, and went in. And right there the Happy Family unwittingly became cast for the leading parts in one of those dramas of the West which never are heard of outside the theater in which grim circumstance stages them for a single playing—unless, indeed, the curtain rings down on a murder which brings the actors before their district judge for trial. The beginning was casual to the point of triviality.

Sary, Ellen, Sybilly, Marg'reet, and Jos'phine Denson—spelled in accordance with parental pronunciation—were swinging idly upon that hitching pole, with the self-conscious sang-froid of country children come to town. They backed away from the Happy Family's approach, grinned foolishly in response to their careless greeting, and tittered openly at the resplendence of the Native Son, who was wearing his black Angora chaps with the three white diamonds down each leg, the gay horse-hair hatband, crimson neckerchief, and Mexican spurs with their immense rowels and ornate conchos of hand-beaten silver. Sary, Ellen, Marg'reet, Jos'phine, and Sybilly were also resplend-

ent, in their way. Their carrotty hair was tied with ribbons quite aggressively new, their freckles shone with maternal scrubbing, and there was a hint of homemade "crochet lace" beneath each stiffly starched dress.

"Hello, kids!" Weary greeted them amiably, with a secret smile over the memory of a time when they had purloined the Little Doctor's pills, and had made reluctant acquaintance with a stomach pump. "Where's the circus going to be at?"

"There ain't goin' to be none," Sybilly retorted, because she was the forward one of the family. "We're going away; *on the train*. The next one that comes along. We're going to be on it all night, too; and we'll have to *cat* on it, too."

"Well, by golly, you'll want something to eat, then!" Slim was feeling abstractedly in his pocket for a coin, for these were the nieces of the Countess, and therefore claimed more than a cursory interest from Slim. "You take this up to the store, and see if yuh can't swap it for something good to eat." Because Sary was the smallest of the lot, he pressed the dollar into her shrinking, amazed palm.

"Paw's got more money'n that," Sybilly announced proudly. "Paw's got a *million dollars*. A man bought our ranch, and gave him a *lot* of money. We're rich now. Maybe paw'll buy us a phonygraft. He said maybe he would. And maw's goin' to have a blue silk dress with green onto it. And——"

"Better haze along and buy that stuff to eat," Slim interrupted the family gift for rapid speech. He had caught the boys grinning, and fancied they were tracing a likeness between the garrulity of Sybilly and the fluency of her aunt, the Countess. "You don't want that train to go off and leave yuh, by golly."

"Wonder who bought Denson out?" Cal Emmett asked of no one in particular as the children went strutting off to the store to spend the dollar which little Sary clutched so tightly it seemed as if the goddess of liberty must surely have been imprinted on her palm.

When they went inside, and found Denson himself pompously "setting 'em

up to the house," Cal repeated the question in a slightly different form to the man himself.

Denson, while he was ready to impress the beholders with his unaccustomed affluence, became noticeably embarrassed at the inquiry, and edged off into vague generalities.

"I jest nacherlly had to sell when I got m' price," he told the Happy Family in a tone that savored strongly of apology. "I like the country, and I like m' neighbors fine. Never'd ask for better than the Flyin' U has been t' me. I ain't got no kick comin' there. Sorry to hear the Old Man's hurt back East. Mary was real put out at not bein' able to see Louise 'fore she went away"—Louise being the Countess and Mary Denson's sister—"but soon as I sold I got oneasy like. The feller wanted p'session right away, too, so I told Mary we might as well start b'fore we git outa the notion. I wouldn't uh cared about sellin', maybe, but the kids needs to be in school. They're growin' up in ign'rance out here, and Mary's folks wants us to come back 'n' settle close handy by—they been at us t' sell out and move fer the last five years, now, and I told Mary——"

Even Cal forgot eventually that he had asked a question; what interest he had felt at first was smothered to death under that blanket of words, and he followed the boys out and over to Rusty Brown's place, where Denson, because of an old grudge against Rusty, might be trusted not to follow.

"Mamma!" Weary commented amusedly when they were crossing the street. "That Denson bunch can talk the fastest and longest, and say the least, of any outfit I ever saw."

"Wonder who did buy him out?" Jack Bates queried. "Old ginger-whiskers didn't pass out any *facts*, yuh notice. He couldn't have got much; his land's mostly gravel and doby patches. He's got a water right on Flyin' U Creek, you know—first right at that, seems to me—and a dandy fine spring in that coulee. Wonder why our outfit didn't buy him out?"

"This wantin' to sell is something I

never heard of b'fore," Slim said slowly. "To hear him tell it, that ranch uh hisn was worth a dollar an inch, by golly. I don't b'lieve he's been wantin' to sell out. If he had, Mis' Bixby would 'a' said something about it. *She* don't know about this here sellin' business, or she'd 'a' said——"

"Yeah, you can most generally bank on the Countess telling all she knows," Cal assented, with some sarcasm, and Slim grunted and turned sulky afterward.

Denson and his affairs they speedily forgot for a time, in the diversion which Rusty Brown's familiar place afforded to young men with unjaded nerves and a zest for the primitive pleasures. Not until mid-afternoon did it occur to them that Flying U Coulee was deserted by all save old Patsy, and that there were chores to be done if all the creatures of the coulee would sleep in comfort that night. Pink, therefore, withdrew his challenge to the bunch, and laid his billiard cue down with a sigh, and the remark that all he lacked was time to have the scalps of every last one of them hanging from his belt. Pink was figurative in his speech, you will understand, and also a bit chesty over beating Andy Green and Big Medicine twice in succession.

It occurred to Weary that a telegram of cheer to the Old Man and his anxious watchers might not come amiss. Therefore the Happy Family mounted and rode to the depot to send it, and on the way wrangled over the wording of it, after their usual contentious manner.

"Better tell 'em everything is fine at this end uh the line," Cal suggested, and was hooted at for a poet.

"Just say——" Weary began, when he was interrupted by the discordant clamor from a trainload of sheep that had just pulled in and stopped. "Maa-aa, *ma-a-aaa*, darn yuh!" he shouted derisively at the peering, plaintive faces glimpsed between the close-set bars. "Mamma! how I do love sheep!" He put spurs to his horse, and galloped down to the station to rid his ears of the turbulent wave of protest from the cars.

Naturally, it required some time to word the telegram satisfactorily to all parties. Outside, cars banged together, an engine snorted stertorously, and suffocating puffs of coal smoke now and then invaded the waiting room while the Happy Family were sending that message. If you are curious, the message was not at all spectacular. It finally said merely:

Everything fine here. Take good care of the Old Man. How's the Kid stacking up?

It was signed simply "THE BUNCH."

"Mary's little lambs are here yet, I see," the Native Son remarked carelessly when they went out. "Enough for all the Marys in the country. How would you like to be Mary?"

"Not for me!" Irish declared, and turned his face away.

Others there were who rode the length of the train with faces averted and looks of disdain. Cowmen, all of them, they shared the range prejudice, and took no pains to hide it.

The wind blew strong from the east that day; it whistled through the open, double-decked cars packed with gray, woolly bodies, with voices ever raised in strident complaint, and the stench of them smote the unaccustomed nostrils of the Happy Family, and put them to disgusted flight up the track and across it to where the air was clean again.

"Honest to grandma, I'd make the poorest kind of a sheep-herder," Big Medicine bawled earnestly when they were well away from the noise and smell of them. "If I had to herd sheep, by cripes, do you know what I'd do? Haze 'em into a coulee, and turn loose with a good rifle and plenty uh shells, and call in the coyotes to fill up. That's the way I'd herd sheep. It's the only way you can shut 'em up. They just 'baa-aa, baa-aa, baa-aa,' from the time they're dropped till somebody kills 'em off. Honest, they blat in their sleep. I've heard 'em."

"When you and the dogs were out shooin' off coyotes?" asked Andy Green pointedly, and so precipitated dissension which lasted for ten miles.

CHAPTER III.

Slim, rising first from dinner the next day but one, opened the door of the mess house, and stood there idly picking his teeth before he went about his work. After a minute of listening to the boys "joshing" old Patsy about some gooseberry pies he had baked without sugar, he turned his face outward, threw up his head like a startled bull, and began to sniff.

"Say, I smell *sheep*, by golly!" he announced, in the bellowing tone which was his conversational voice, and sniffed again.

"Oh, that's just a left-over in your system from the dose yuh got in town Sunday," Weary explained soothingly. "I've smelled sheep, and tasted sheep, and dreamed sheep, ever since."

"No, by golly, it's *sheep*! It ain't no memory. I—I b'lieve I *hear* 'em, too, by golly!" Slim stepped out away from the building, and faced suspiciously down the coulee.

"I never suspected you of imagination before, Slim," the Native Son drawled, and loitered out to where he stood, still sniffing. "I wonder if you're catching it from Andy and me. Don't you think you ought to be vaccinated?"

"That ain't imagination," Pink called out from within. "When anybody claims there's sheep in Flying U Coulee, that's straight loco."

"Come on out here and smell 'em yourself, then!" Slim bawled indignantly. "I never see such an outfit as this is gittin' to be; you fellers don't believe *nobody*, no more. We ain't *all* of us Andy Greens."

Upon hearing this, Andy Green pushed back his chair and strolled outside. He clapped his hand down upon Slim's fat-cushioned shoulder, and swayed him gently. "Never mind, Slim; we can't all be famous," he comforted. "Some 'day maybe I'll teach yuh the fine art of lying more convincingly than the ordinary man can tell the truth. It *is* a fine art; it takes a genius to put it across. Now, the only time anybody doubts my word is when I'm sticking to the truth like a sand bur to a sheep."

From away to the west, borne on the wind which swept steadily down the coulee, came that faint, humming sing-song, which can be made only by a herd of a thousand or more sheep, all blating in different keys—or by a distant band playing monotonously upon the middle register of its varied instruments.

"Slim's right, by gracious! It's sheep, sure as yuh live!" Andy did not wait for more, but started at a fast walk for the stable and his horse. After him, more slowly, went the Native Son, who had not been with the Flying U long enough to sense the magnitude of the affront, and Slim, who knew to a nicety just what "cowmen" considered the unpardonable sin, and the rest of the Happy Family who were rather incredulous still.

"Must be some fool herder just crossing the coulee, on the move somewhere," Weary gave as a solution. "Half of 'em don't know a fence when they see it."

As they galloped toward the sound and the smell, they expressed freely their opinion of sheep, the men who owned them, and the lunatics who watched over the blating things. They were cattlemen to the marrow in their bones, and they gloried in their prejudice against the woolly despoilers of the range.

All these years had the Flying U been immune from the nuisance, save for an occasional trespasser who was quickly sent about his business. The Flying U Range had been kept in the main inviolate from the little, gray vandals which ate the grass clean to the sod and trampled with their sharp-pointed hoofs the very roots into lifelessness; which polluted the water holes and creeks until cattle and horses went thirsty rather than drink; which, in that land of scant rainfall, so devastated the range where they fed that for the remainder of that season a long-established prairie-dog town was not more barren. What wonder if the men who owned cattle, and those who tended them, hated sheep? So does the farmer dread an invasion of grasshoppers.

A mile down the coulee they came

upon the band, with two herders and four dogs keeping watch. Across the coulee and up the hillsides they spread, like a waving, noisome gray blanket. "Maa-aa, maa-aa, maa-aa." Two thousand strong they blatted a strident medley while they hurried here and there after sweeter bunches of grass, like a disturbed ant hill.

The herders loitered upon either slope, their dogs lying close beside them. There was good grass in that part of the coulee; the Flying U had been saving it religiously all winter, for the saddle horses when they were gathered and held temporarily at the ranch; it saved herding, and a week in that pasture would put a keen edge on their spirits for the hard work of the calf round-up. A dozen or two that ranged close had already been gathered and were feeding disdainfully in a far corner, as far away from the sheep as the fence would permit.

The Happy Family, riding close-grouped, stiffened in their saddles and stared, amazed, at the outrage.

"Sheep-herders never did have any nerve," Irish observed after a minute. "They keep their places fine! They'll drive their sheep right into your doorway and tell 'em to help themselves to any flowers they may happen to like—oh, they're sure modest and retiring!"

Weary, having charge of the outfit during Chip's absence, was making straight for the nearest herder. Pink and Andy went with him as a matter of course.

"You fellows ride up around that side, and put the run on them sheep," Weary shouted back to the others. "We'll start the other side moving. Make 'em *travel*—back where they came from." He jerked his head toward the north. He knew, just as they all knew, that there had been no sheep to the south—unless one counted those which ranged across the Missouri River.

As the three forced their horses up the steep slope, the herder, sitting slouched upon a rock, glanced up at them dully. He had a long stick with which he was apathetically turning over

the smaller stones within his reach, and as apathetically killing the black bugs that scuttled out from the moist earth beneath. He desisted from this unexciting pastime as they drew near, and eyed them with the sullenness which comes of long isolation when the person's nature forbids that other extreme of babbling garrulity; for no man can live for months alone and remain perfectly normal. Nature, that stern mistress, always exacts a penalty from us foolish mortals who would ignore the instincts she has wisely implanted within us for our good.

"Maybe," Weary began mildly and without preface, "you don't know this is private property. Get busy with your dogs, and haze your bunch back on the bench." He waved his hand to the north. "And when you get a good start in that direction," he added, "yuh better keep right on going."

The herder surveyed him morosely, and said nothing. Neither did he rise from the rock to obey the command. The dogs sat upon their haunches and perked their ears inquiringly, as if they understood better than did their master that these men were not to be quite overlooked.

"I meant to-day," Weary hinted, as one who deliberately holds his voice quiet.

"I never asked yuh what yuh meant," the herder mumbled, scowling. "We got to keep 'em on water another hour, yet." He went back to turning over the small rocks, and pursuing with his stick the bugs, as if the whole subject was squeezed dry of interest.

For a minute Weary stared unwinkingly down at him, uncertain whether to resent this as pure insolence, or condone it as imbecility. "Mamma!" he breathed at last, and grinned at Andy and Pink. "This is a real obliging cuss. Come on, boys; he's too busy killing bugs to do anything else."

He led the way around to the far side of the band, the nearest sheep scuttling away from them as they passed. "I don't suppose we could work the combination on those dogs—do you think?" he considered aloud, glancing back at

them where they sat upon their haunches and watched the strange riders. "Say, Cadwolloper, you took a few lessons in sheep-herding, a couple of years ago, when you was stück on that girl—remember? Whistle 'em up here and set 'em to work."

"You go to the devil!" Pink's curved lips pronounced amiably to his boss. "I've got loss uh memory on the sheep business."

Whereat Weary grinned, and said no more about it.

On the opposite side of the coulee, the boys seemed to be laboring as fruitlessly with the other herder. They heard Big Medicine's truculent bellow as he leaned from the saddle and waved a fist close to the face of the herder, but though they rode with their eyes fixed upon the group they failed to see any resulting movement of dogs, sheep, or man.

There is, at times, a certain safety in being the hopeless minority. Though seven indignant cow-punchers surrounded him, that herder was secure from any personal molestation—and he knew it. They were seven against one. Therefore, after making some caustic remarks which produced as little effect as had Weary's comment upon the first man, the seven were constrained to ride here and there along the wavering gray line, and, with shouts and swinging ropes, drive the sheep themselves.

There was much clamor and dust and riding to and fro. There was language which would have made the mothers of them weep, and there were faces grown crimson from wrath. Eventually, however, the Happy Family faced the north fence of the Flying U boundary, and saw the last woolly back scrape under the lower wire, leaving a toll of greasy wool hanging from the barbs.

The herders had drawn together, and were looking on from a distance, and the four dogs were yelping uneasily over their enforced inaction. The Happy Family went back and rounded up the herders, and by sheer weight of numbers forced them to the fence without laying so much as a finger upon them. The one who had been killing

black bugs gave them an ugly look as he crawled through, but he did not say anything.

"Snap them wires down where they belong," Weary commanded tersely.

The man hesitated a minute, then sullenly unhooked the barbs of the two lower strands so that the wires, which had thus been lifted to permit the passing of the sheep, twanged apart, and once more stretched straight from post to post.

"Now, just keep in mind the fact that fences are built for use. This is a private ranch, and sheep are just about as welcome as smallpox. Chase them sheep of yours as far north as they'll travel by dark, and at daylight start 'em going again. Where's your camp, anyhow?"

"None of your business!" mumbled the bug killer sourly.

Weary scanned the undulating slope beyond the fence, saw no sign of a camp, and glanced uncertainly at his fellows. "Well, it don't matter much where it is; you see to it you don't sleep within five miles of here, or you're liable to have bad dreams. Hike along, now."

They waited inside the fence until the retreating sheep lost their individuality as blating animals ambling erratically here and there while they moved toward the brow of the hill, and merged into a great, gray blotch against the faint green of the starting grass—a blotch from which rose again that vibrant, singsong humming of many voices mingled. Then they rode back down the coulee to their own work, taking it for granted that the trespassing was an incident which would not be repeated—by those particular sheep, at any rate.

It was, therefore, with something of a shock that the Happy Family awoke the next morning to Pink's melodious treble shouting in at the bunk house at sunrise:

"G'wa-a-y round 'em, Shep! Seven black ones in the coulee!" Men who know well the West are familiar with that facetious call.

"Ah, what's the matter with yuh?" Irish raised a rumpled, brown head from his pillow and blinked sleepily at

him. "I've been dreaming I was a sheep-herder, all night."

"Well, you've got the swellest chance in the world to 'make every dream come true, dearie,'" Pink retorted. "The whole blamed coulee's full uh sheep. I woke up a while ago and thought I just imagined I heard 'em again; so I went out to take a look—or a smell, it was—and they're sure enough there!"

Weary swung one long leg out from under his blankets and reached for his clothes. He did not say anything, but his face portended trouble for the invaders.

"Say!" cried Big Medicine, coming out of his bunk as if it were afire. "I tell yuh right now them blattin' human apes wouldn't git gay around here if I was runnin' the outfit. The way I'd have uh puttin' them sheep on the run wouldn't be slow, by cripes! I'll guarantee——"

By then the bunk house was buzzing with voices, and there was none to give heed to Big Medicine's blatant boasting. Others there were who seemed rather inclined to give Weary good advice while they pulled on their boots and sought for their gloves, and rolled early-morning cigarettes, and otherwise prepared themselves for what fate might have waiting for them outside the door.

"Are you sure they're in the coulee, Cadwolloper?" Weary asked during a brief lull. "They *could* be up on the hill——"

"In the coulee?" snapped Pink. "Why, darn it, they're slopping over into the little pasture! I could see 'em from the stable. They——"

"Come and eat your breakfast first, boys, anyway." Weary had his hand upon the doorknob. "A few minutes won't make any difference, one way or the other." He went out, and over to the mess house to see if Patsy had the coffee ready; for this was a good half hour earlier than the Flying U outfit usually bestirred themselves on these days of leisurely preparation for round-up and waiting for good grass.

"I'll be darned if I'd be as calm as he is," Cal Emmett muttered, while the

door was being closed. "Good thing the Old Man ain't here now. He'd go straight up in the air."

"I betche there'll be a killin' yet, before we're through with them sheep," gloomed Happy Jack. "When sheep-herders starts in once to be ornery, there ain't no way uh stoppin' 'em except by killin' 'em off. And that'll mean the pen for a lot of us fellers——"

"Well, by golly, it won't be *me*," Slim declared loudly. "Yuh wouldn't ketch *me* goin' t' jail fer no dog-gone sheep-herder. They oughta be a bounty on 'em, by rights."

"Seems queer they'd be right back here this morning, after being hazed out yesterday afternoon," said Andy Green thoughtfully. "Looks like they're plumb anxious to build a lot uh trouble for themselves."

Patsy, thumping energetically the bottom of a tin pan, sent them trooping to the mess house. There it was evident that the breakfast had been unduly hurried; there were no biscuits in sight, for one thing, though Patsy was lumbering about the stove frying hot cakes. They were in too great a hurry to wait for them, however. They swallowed their coffee hurriedly, bolted a few mouthfuls of meat and fried eggs, and let it go at that.

Weary looked at them with a faint smile. "I'm going to give a few of you fellows a chance to herd sheep to-day," he announced, cooling his coffee so that it would not actually scald his palate. "Some of you will have to take the trail up on the hill, and meet us outside the fence, so when we chase 'em through you can make a good job of it this time. I wonder——"

"One man is enough to put the fear uh the Lord into them herders," Andy remarked slightly. "Once they're on the move——"

"All right, my boy; you can be the man," Weary told him promptly. "I was going to have a bunch of you take a packadero outfit down toward Boiler Bottom and comb the breaks along there for horses—and I sure do hate to spend the whole day chasing sheep-herders around over the country. So

we'll haze 'em through the fence again, and you can meet us there and keep 'em going. And if you locate their camp, kinda impress it on the tender, if you can round him up, that the Flying U ain't pasturing sheep this spring. No matter what kinda talk he puts up—you put the run on 'em till you see 'em across One-man. Better have Patsy put you up a lunch—unless you're fond uh mutton."

Andy twisted his mouth disgustedly. "Say, I'm going to quit handing out any valuable advice to *you*, Weary," he expostulated grimly.

"Haw—haw—*haw-w-w!*" laughed Big Medicine, and slapped Andy on the shoulder so that his face almost came in contact with his plate. "Yuh *will* try to work some innercent man into sheep-herdin', will yuh? Haw—haw—*haw-w!* You'll come in to-night blatin'—if yuh don't stay out on the range tryin' t' eat grass, by cripes! Andy had a little lamb that follered him around all day——"

"Better let Bud take that herdin' job, Weary," Andy suggested. "It won't hurt *him*—he's blatin' already."

"If you think you're liable to need somebody along——" Weary began, soft-heartedly relenting, "why, I guess you'd——"

"If I can't handle two crazy sheep-herders without any help, by gracious, I'll get me a job holdin' yarn in an old ladies' home," Andy cut in pridefully, and got up from the table. "Being a truthful man, I can't say I'm stuck on the job; but I'm game for it. And I'll promise you there won't be no more sheep of *that* brand eating off our doorsteps. What darned outfit is it, anyway? I never bumped into any Dot sheep before to my knowledge."

"It's a new one on me," Weary testified, heading the procession down to the stable. "If they belonged anywhere in this part of the country, though, they wouldn't be acting the way they are. They'd be wise to the fact that it ain't healthy."

Even while he spoke, his eyes were fixed with cold intensity upon a fringe of gray across the coulee below the lit-

tle pasture. To the nostrils of the outraged Happy Family was borne that indescribable aroma which betrays the presence of sheep; that aroma which sheepmen love and which cattlemen hate, and which a favorable wind will carry a long way.

They slapped saddles on their horses in record time, that morning, and raced down the coulee, shouting ironically commiserating sentences to the unfortunate Andy, who rode more slowly up to the mess house for the lunch which Patsy had waiting for him in a flour sack, and afterward climbed the grade and loped along outside the line fence to a point opposite the sheep and shouting horse-herders who forced them back by weight of numbers.

This morning the herders were not quite so passive. The bug killer still scowled, but he spoke without the preliminary sulky silence of the day before.

"We're goin' across the coulee," he growled. "Them's orders. We range south uh here."

"No, you don't," Weary dissented calmly. "Not by a long shot, you won't. Haze 'em back, boys."

CHAPTER IV.

With the sun shining comfortably upon his back and with a cigarette between his lips, Andy sat upon his horse and watched, in silent glee, while the irate Happy Family scurried here and there behind the band, swinging their ropes down upon the woolly backs and searching their vocabularies for new and terrible epithets. Andy smiled broadly as a colorful phrase now and then boomed across the coulee in that clear, snappy atmosphere which carries sounds far. He did not expect to do much smiling upon his own account that day, and he was, therefore, grateful for the opportunity to behold the spectacle before him.

There was Slim, for instance, careening downhill toward home because, in his zeal to slap an old ewe smartly with his rope, he drove her unexpectedly under his horse, and so created a momen-

tary panic that came near standing Slim on his head. And there was Big Medicine, whistling until he was purple, while the herder, with a single gesture, held the dog motionless though a dozen sheep broke back from the band and climbed a slope so steep that Big Medicine was compelled to go after them afoot and turn them with stones and profane objurgations.

It was very funny—when one could sit at ease upon the hilltop and smoke a cigarette while others risked apoplexy and their souls' salvation below. By the time they panted up the last rock-strewn slope of the bluff and sent the vanguard of the invaders under the fence, Andy's mood was complacent in the extreme and his smile offensively wide.

"Oh, you needn't look so sorry for us," drawled the Native Son, jingling over toward him until only the fence and a few feet of space divided them. "Here's where you get yours, *amigo*. I wish you a pleasant day—and a long one!" He waved his hand in mocking adieu, touched his horse with his shining, silver spurs, and rode gayly away down the coulee.

"Here, sheep-herder, 's your outfit. Ma-aa-a-a!" jeered Big Medicine. "You'll wisht, by cripes, you was a dozen men just like yuh before you're through with the deal. Haw—haw—haw-w!"

There were others who, seeing Andy's grin, had something to say upon the subject before they left. Weary rode up and looked undecidedly from Andy to the sheep, and back again.

"If yuh don't feel like tackling it single-handed, I'll send——"

"What do yuh think I am, anyway?" Andy interrupted crisply. "A Montgomery-Ward two-for-a-quarter cow-puncher? Don't you fellows waste any time worrying over *me*!"

The herders stared at Andy curiously when he swung in behind the tail end of the band and kept pace with their slow moving, but they did not speak beyond shouting an occasional command to their dogs. Neither did Andy have anything to say, until he saw that they were

swinging steadily to the west instead of keeping straight north, as they had been told to do. Then he rode over to the nearest herder, who happened to be the bug killer.

"You don't want to get turned around," he hinted quietly. "That's north, over there."

"I'm working fer the man that pays my wages," the fellow retorted glumly, and waved an arm to a collie that was waiting for orders. The dog dropped his head and ran around the right wing of the band, with sharp yelps and dartings here and there, turning them still more to the west.

Andy hesitated, then decided to leave the man alone for the present, and rode around to the south and the other herder.

"Turn these sheep north!" he commanded, disdaining preface or explanation; which indicated a rise in his emotional temperature.

"I'm workin' for the man that pays my wages," the herder made answer stolidly, and chewed steadily upon a quid of tobacco which had stained his lips unbecomingly.

So they had talked the thing over, had those two sheep-herders, and were following a premeditated plan of defiance! Andy looked at this one a minute. "You turn them sheep," he commanded again, and laid a hand upon his saddle horn suggestively.

"I will—*not*," said the herder calmly, and cocked a wary eye at him from under his hat brim. Not all herders, let it be said in passing, take unto themselves the mental attributes of their sheep; there are those who believe that a bold front is better than bullets, and who will back that belief by a very bold front indeed.

Andy appraised him mentally, decided that he was an able-bodied man, and, therefore, fightable, and threw his right leg over the cantle with a quite surprising alacrity.

"Are you going to turn them sheep?" Andy was taking off his coat when he made that inquiry.

"Not for *your* tellin'. You keep back, or I'll sick the dogs on yuh." He

turned and whistled to the nearest one; whereupon Andy hit him on the ear.

They clinched and pummeled when and where they could. The dog came up, circled the gyrating forms twice, then sat down upon his haunches at a safe distance, tilted his head sidewise, and lifted his ears interestedly. He was a wise little dog, that. The other dog remained phlegmatically at his post; so also did the bug killer.

"Are you going to turn them sheep?" Andy spoke breathlessly, but with deadly significance.

"N-yes!"

Andy took his fingers from the other's Adam's apple, his knee from the other's diaphragm, and went over to where he had thrown down his coat; felt in a pocket for his handkerchief, and, when he had found it, applied it to his nose, which was bleeding profusely.

"Fly at it, then," he advised, eying the other sternly over the handkerchief. "I'd hate to ask you a third time."

"I'd hate to have yuh," conceded the herder reluctantly. "I was sure I c'd lick yuh, or I'd 'a' done it before." He turned to the dog and sent it racing down the south line of the band.

Andy got thoughtfully back upon his horse, and sat there looking hard at the herder. "Say, you're a grade above the general run uh lamb lickers," he said, after a minute. "Who are you working for, and what's your object in throwing your sheep on Flying U land? There's plenty uh range to the north."

"I'm workin'," said the herder, "for the Dot. I thought you could read brands."

"Don't get sassy—I've got a punch or two I haven't used yet. Who owns these woolies?"

"Well—Whittaker & Oleson, if yuh want to know."

"I do." Andy was keeping pace with him around the band, which edged off from them and the dogs. "And what makes you so crazy about Flying U grass?" he pursued.

"We've got to cross that coulee to git to where we're headed for; we got a right to, and we're going to do it." The

herder paused, and glanced up at Andy sourly. "We knowed you was an ornery outfit; the boss told us so. And he told us you was blank ca'tridges, and we needn't back up just 'cause you raised up on your hind legs and howled a little. I've had truck with you cowmen before. I've herded sheep in Wyoming." He walked a few steps with his head down, considering.

"I better go over and talk to the other fellow," he said, looking up at Andy as if all his antagonism had oozed in the fight. "You ride along this edge so they won't scatter—we ought to be grazin' 'em along, by rights; only you seem to be in such an all-fired rush——"

"You go on and tell that loco son of a gun over there what he's up against," Andy urged. "Blank cartridges—I sure do like that! If you only knew it, high-power dumdums would be a lot closer to our brand. Run along—I am in a kinda hurry this morning."

Andy, riding slowly upon the outskirts of the grazing, blatting band, watched the two confer earnestly together a hundred yards or so away. They seemed to be having some sort of argument; the bug killer gesticulated with the long stick he carried, and the sheep scattered irresponsibly while they fed. Andy wondered what made sheepmen so "ornery," particularly the herders. He wondered why the fellow he had thrashed was so insultingly defiant at first, and, after the thrashing, so unresentful and communicative, and so amenable to authority, withal. He felt his nose, and decided that it was, all things considered, a cheap victory, and one of which he need not be ashamed.

The herder came back presently and helped drive the sheep over the edge of the bluff which bordered Antelope Coulee. The bug killer, upon his side, seemed also imbued with the spirit of obedience. Andy heard him curse a collicie into frenzied zeal, and smiled approvingly.

"Now you're acting a heap more human," he observed; and the man from Wyoming grinned ruefully, by way of reply.

Antelope Coulee at that point was

steep, too steep for riding; so that Andy dismounted and dug his boot heels into the soft soil, as did the herder. When he was halfway down, a noise behind him made him look back, straight into the scowling gaze of the bug killer, who was sliding down behind him.

"Thought you were hazing down the other side of 'em?" Andy called back, but the herder did not choose to answer save with another scowl.

Andy edged his horse around an impracticable slope of shale stuff, and went on. The herder followed. When he was within twelve feet or so of the bottom, there was a sound of pebbles knocked loose in haste, a scrambling, and then the impact of a body. Andy teetered, lost his balance, and went to the bottom in one glorious slide. He landed, with the bug killer on top—and the bug killer failed to remove his person as speedily as true courtesy exacted.

Andy kicked and wriggled unavailingly, and tried to remember what that high-colored, vituperative sentence was that Irish had invented over a stubborn sheep; he would like to have repeated it to the bug killer. The herder from Wyoming ran up, caught Andy's horse, and held it while he untied Andy's rope from the saddle.

"Good fer you, Oscar," he praised the bug killer. "Hang onto him while I take a few turns." He thereupon helped force Andy's arms to his sides and wound the rope several times rather tightly around Andy's outraged, squirming person.

"Oh, it ain't goin' to do yuh no good to buck around," admonished the tier. "I learned this here little trick down in Wyoming. A bunch uh punchers done it to *me*—and I've been just achin' all over fer a chanct to return the favor to some uh you gay boys. And," he added, with malicious satisfaction while he rolled Andy over and tied a perfectly unslippable knot behind, "it gives me great pleasure to hand the dose out to *you*, in p'ticular. If I was a mean man, I'd hand yuh the boot a few times fer luck; but I'll save that up till next time."

"You can bet your sweet life there'll *be* a next time," Andy promised earnestly, with embellishments better suited to the occasion than to a children's party.

"Well, when it arrives I'm sure Johnny on the spot. Them Wyoming punchers beat me up after they'd got me tied. I'm tellin' yuh so you'll see I ain't mean unless I'm drove to it. Turn him feet downhill, so he won't git a rush uh brains to the head and die on our hands. Now, you're goin' to mind your own business, sonny. Next time yuh set out to herd sheep, better see the boss first and git on the job *right*."

He rose to his feet, surveyed Andy with his hands on his hips, mentally pronounced the job well done, and took a generous chew of tobacco, after which he grinned down at the tied one.

"That the language uh flowers you're talkin'?" he inquired banteringly before he turned his attention to the horse. He disposed of that by tying up the reins and giving it a slap on the rump. When it had trotted fifty yards down the coulee bottom and showed a disposition to go farther, he whistled to his dogs and turned again to Andy. "This here is just a hint to that bunch you trot with to leave us and our sheep alone," he observed. "We don't pick no quarrels, but we're goin' to cross our sheep wherever we dern please, to git where we want to go. Gawd didn't make this range and hand it right over to you cowmen to put in yer pockets—I guess there's a chanct fer other folks to hang on by their eyebrows, any-way."

Andy, lying there like a very good presentation of a giant cocoon, roped round and round, with his arms pinned to his sides, had the doubtful pleasure of seeing that noisome, foolish-faced band trail down Antelope Coulee and back upon the level they had just left, and of knowing to a gloomy certainty that he could do nothing about it, except swear; and even that palls when a man has gone over his entire repertoire three times in rapid succession.

Andy, therefore, when the last sheep had trotted out of sight, hearing, and

smell, wriggled himself into as comfortable a position as his bonds would permit, and, being an adaptable young man, took a nap.

CHAPTER V.

Andy, only half awake, tried to obey both instinct and habit by reaching up to pull his hat down over his eyes so that the sun could not shine upon his lids so hotly. When he discovered that he could do no more than wriggle his fingers, he came back with a jolt to reality and tried to sit up. It is surprising to a man to discover suddenly just how important a part his arms play in the most simple of body movements; Andy, with his arms pinioned tightly the whole length of them, rolled over on his face, kicked a good deal, and rolled back again, but he did not sit up, as he had confidently expected to do.

He lay absolutely quiet for at least five minutes, staring up at the brilliant blue arch above him. Then he began to speak rapidly and earnestly; a man just close enough to hear his voice sweeping up to certain rhetorical climaxes, pausing there, and commencing again with a rhythmic fluency of intonation, might have thought that he was repeating poetry—Milton's majestic blank verse, it sounded like. But he was not doing anything of the sort. Andy was engaged in a methodical, scientific, reprehensibly soul-satisfying period of swearing.

A curlew, soaring low, with long beak outstretched before him and long legs outstretched behind, cast a beady eye upon him and shrilled "*Cor-reck! Cor-reck!*" in unregenerate approbation of the blasphemy, so that Andy stopped suddenly and laughed.

"Glad you agree with me, old sport," he addressed the bird whimsically, with a reaction to his normally cheerful outlook. "Sheep-herders are all those things I named over, birdie, and some that I can't think of at present."

He tried again, this time, with a more careful realization of his limitations, to assume an upright position; and, being a persevering young man, and one

with a ready wit, he managed at length to wriggle himself back upon the slope from which he had slid in his sleep, and, by digging in his heels and going carefully, he did at last rise upon his knees, and from there triumphantly to his feet.

He had at first believed that one of the herders would, in the course of an hour or so, return and untie him, when he hoped to be able to retrieve, in a measure, his own self-respect—which he had lost when the first three feet of his rope had encircled him. To be tied like this by sheep-herders! Andy gritted his teeth and started down the coulee.

He was hungry, and his lunch was tied to his saddle. He looked eagerly down the coulee in the faint hope of seeing his horse grazing somewhere along its length, until the numbness of his arms and hands reminded him that forty lunches, tied upon forty saddles at his side, would be of no use to him in his present position. His hands he could not move from his thighs; he could wiggle his fingers—which he did, to relieve as much as possible that unpleasant prickly sensation which we call a "going to sleep" of the afflicted members. When it occurred to him that he could not do anything with his horse, if he found it, he gave up looking for it, and started for the ranch, walking awkwardly because of his bonds, the sun shining hotly upon his brown head, because his hat had been knocked from his head in the scuffle, and he could not pick it up and put it back.

Taking a straight course, and not bothering with the trail, he struck Flying U Coulee at the point where the sheep had left it. On the way there he had crossed their trail where they went through the fence farther along the coulee than before, and, therefore, with a better chance of passing undetected, especially since the Happy Family, believing that he was forcing them steadily to the north, would not be watching for sheep. The barbed-wire barrier bothered him somewhat. He was compelled to lie down and roll under the fence in the most undignified manner, and when he was through there was the

problem of getting upon his feet again. But he managed it somehow, and went on down the coulee, perspiring with the heat and a bitter realization of his ignominy. What the Happy Family would have to say when they saw him, even Andy Green's vivid imagination declined to picture.

He knew by the sun that it was full noon when he came in sight of the stable and corrals, and his soul sickened at the thought of facing that derisive bunch of punchers, with their fiendish grins and their barbed tongues. But he was very hungry, and his arms had reached the limit of endurance with their prickly sensations. He shook his hair back from his beaded forehead, cast a wary glance at the silence of the stables, set his jaw, and went on up the hill to the mess house, wishing tardily that he had waited until they were off at work again, when he might intimidate old Patsy into keeping quiet about his predicament.

Within the mess house was the clatter of knives and forks plied by hungry men, the sound of desultory talk, and a savory odor of good things to eat. The door was closed. Andy stood before it as a guilty-consciened child stands before its teacher, clicked his teeth together, and, since he could not open the door, lifted his right foot and gave it a kick to strain the hinges.

Within were exclamations of astonishment, silence, and then a heavy tread. Patsy opened the door, gasped, and stood still, his eyes popping out like a startled rabbit.

"Well, what's eating you?" Andy demanded querulously, and pushed past him into the room.

Not all of the Happy Family were there. Cal, Jack Bates, Irish, and Happy Jack had gone into the Bad Lands next the river; but there were enough left to make the soul of Andy quiver forebodingly, and to send the flush of extreme humiliation to his cheeks.

The Happy Family looked at him in stunned surprise, then they glanced at one another in swift, wordless inquiry, grinned wisely and warily, and went on

with their dinner. At least, they pretended to go on with their dinner, while Andy glared at them with amazed reproach in his misleading honest gray eyes.

"When you've got plenty of time," he said at last, in a choked tone, "maybe one of you obliging cusses will untie this darned rope."

"Why, sure!" Pink threw a leg over the bench and got up with cheerful alacrity. "I'll do it now, if you say so—I didn't know but what that was some new fad of yours, like——"

"Fad!" Andy repeated the word like an explosion.

"Well, by golly, Andy needn't think I'm goin' to foller that there style," Slim stated solemnly. "I need m' rope for something else than to tie m' clothes on with."

"I sure do hate to see a man wear funny things just to make himself conspicuous," Pink observed, while he fumbled the knot, which was intricate.

Andy jerked away from him.

"Maybe this looks funny to you," he cried, husky with wrath. "But I can't seem to see the joke myself. I admit I let them herders make a monkey of me—they slipped up behind me, going down into Antelope Coulee, and slid down the bluff onto me; and before I could get up they got me tied, all right. I licked one of 'em before that, and thought I had 'em gentled down——"

Andy stopped short, silenced by that unexplainable sense which warns us when our words are received with cold disbelief.

"Mh-hm—I thought maybe you'd run up against a hostile jack rabbit, or something," Pink purred, and went back to his place on the bench.

"Haw—haw—haw-w-w!" came Big Medicine's tardy bellow. "That's more reasonable than the sheep-herder story, by cripes!"

Andy looked at them much as he had stared up at the sky before he began to swear—speechlessly, with a trembling of the muscles around his mouth. He was quite white, considering how tanned he was, and his forehead was shiny,

with beads of perspiration standing thickly upon it.

"Weary, I wish you'd untie this rope. I can't." He spoke still in that peculiar, husky tone, and when the last words were out his teeth went together with a click.

Weary glanced doubtfully across at the Native Son, who was regarding Andy steadily, as one gazes upon a tangled rope, looking for the end which will easiest lead to an untangling.

Miguel's brown eyes turned languidly to meet the look. "You'd better untie him," he advised, in his soft drawl. "He may not be in the habit of it—but he's telling the truth."

"Untie me, Miguel," begged Andy, going over to him, "and let me at this bunch."

"I'll do it," said Weary, and rose pacifically. "I kinda believe you myself, Andy. But you can't blame the boys none; you've fooled 'em till they're dead shy of anything they can't see through. And, besides, it sure does look like a plant. I'd back you single-handed against a dozen sheep-herders like them two we've been chasing around. If I hadn't felt that way, I wouldn't have sent yuh out alone."

"Well, Andy needn't think he's goin' to stick *me* on that there story," Slim declared, with brutal emphasis. "I've swallered too many of his joshes, by golly! He's figurin' on gittin' us all out on the warpath, runnin' around in circles so's he can give us the laugh. I'll bet, by golly! he *paid* them herders to tie him up like that. He can't fool *me*!"

"Say, Slim, I do believe your brains is commencin' to sprout!" Big Medicine thumped him painfully upon the back by way of accenting the compliment. "You got the idee, all right."

Andy stood while Weary unwound the rope, lifted his numbed arms with some difficulty, and displayed to the doubters his rope-creased wrists and swollen hands.

"I couldn't fight a caterpillar right now," he said thickly, "but you wait! Look at them hands! Do yuh call that a josh? I've been tied up like a bed-

roll for five hours. *But you wait!*" And in the anticipation of a really worth-while revenge, he sat down and began to eat his dinner with a very keen appetite.

It was no longer possible for the Happy Family to doubt the sincerity of Andy, and they stared at him without speaking for a very long moment.

"I don't suppose you know where your horse is at, by this time," Weary observed as casually as possible, breaking a somewhat constrained silence.

"I don't—and I don't give a darn!" Andy snapped back. He ate a few mouthfuls, and added less savagely: "He wasn't in sight, as I came along. I didn't follow the trail; I struck straight across and came down the coulee. He may be at the gate, and he may be down toward Rogers'."

Pink reached for a toothpick, eying Andy sidelong; dimpled his cheeks disarmingly, and cleared his throat. "Please don't kill *me* off when you get that pie swallowed," he began pacifically. "Strange as it may seem, I believe yuh, Andy. What I want to know is this: Who owns them Dots? And what are they chasing all over the Flying U for? It looks plumb malicious to me. Did you find out anything about 'em, Andy, while you—er—while they ——" His eyes twinkled and betrayed him for an arrant pretender. Pink wasn't afraid of anything on earth—least of all Andy Green.

"I will kill yuh by inches, if I hear any remarks out of yuh that ain't respectful," Andy promised, thawing to his normal tone, which was pleasant to the ear. "I didn't find out much about 'em. The fellow I licked told me that Whittaker & Oleson own the sheep. He didn't say——"

"Whittaker! What! Well—by—golly!" Slim thrust his head forward beligerently. "Well, what d'yuh think uh that!" He glared from one face to the other, his gaze resting at last upon Weary. "Say, do yuh reckon it's—*Dunk?*"

Weary paid no heed to Slim. He leaned forward, his face turned to Andy with that concentration of attention

which means so much more than mere exclamation. "You're sure he said Whittaker?" he asked.

His tone and his attitude arrested Andy's cup midway to his mouth. "Sure, Whittaker & Oleson. I never heard of the outfit—who is this Whittaker person?"

Weary settled back in his place and smiled, but his eyes had quite lost their habitually sunny expression.

"Up till four years ago," he explained evenly, "he was the Old Man's partner. We caught him in some mighty dirty work, and—well, he sold out to the Old Man. The old party with the hoofs and tail can't be everywhere at once, the way I've got it sized up, so he turns some of his business over to other folks. Dunk Whittaker's his top hand."

"Why, by golly, he framed up a job on the Gordon boys, and railroaded 'em to the pen, just——"

"Oh, *that's* the gazabo!" Andy's eyes shone with enlightenment. "I've heard a lot about Dunk, but I didn't know his last name——"

"Say! I'll bet they're the outfit that bought out Denson. That's why old Denson acted so queer, maybe. Selling to a sheep outfit would make the old devil feel kinda uneasy, talking to us; but if he sold out to that freak——" Pink's eyes were big and purple with excitement. "And that trainload of sheep we saw Sunday I'll bet is the same identical outfit."

"Dunk Whittaker'd better not try to monkey with *me*, by golly!" Slim's face was lowering. "And he'd better not monkey with the Flyin' U, either. I'd pump him so full uh holes he'd look like a colander, by golly! And I don't care if——"

Weary got up and started for the door, his face suddenly grown careworn. "Slim, you and Miguel better go and hunt up Andy's horse," he said, with a hint of abstraction in his tone, as if his mind was busy with more important things. "Maybe Andy'll feel able to help you set those posts, Bud—and you'd better go along the upper end of the little pasture with the wire stretchers and tighten her up; the top

wire is pretty loose, I noticed this morning." His fingers fumbled with the doorknob.

"Want me to do anything?" Pink asked quizzically just behind him. "I thought sure we'd go and remonstrate with them gay——"

Weary interrupted him: "The herders can wait—and, anyway, I've kinda got an idea Andy wants to hand out his own brand of poison to that bunch. You and I will take a ride over to Denson's and see what's going on over there. Mamma!" he added fervently, under his breath; "I sure do wish Chip and the Old Man were here!"

CHAPTER VI.

Before he laid him down to sleep that night, Weary had repeated to himself many times and fervently that wish for old J. G. Whitmore and the stout staff upon which he was beginning more and more to lean, his brother-in-law, Chip Bennett. As matters stood, he could not even bring himself to let them know anything about his trouble—and that the thing was beginning to assume the form and shape and general malevolent attributes of trouble Weary was forced to admit to himself.

Just at present, an unthinking, unobserving person might pass over this sheep outfit as mere unsavory neighbors, whom it would be agreeable to let alone; but Weary was neither unobserving nor unthinking—nor, for the matter of that, were the rest of the Happy Family. It needed no Happy Jack, with his foreboding nature, to point out the unpleasant possibilities, that night when the committee of two made their informal report at the supper table.

Denson Coulee was, in reality, a meandering branch of Flying U Coulee itself. To reach it, one rode out of Flying U Coulee and over a wide hill, and down again, to Denson's. But the creek—Flying U Creek—followed the devious turnings from Denson Coulee down to Flying U. A long mile of Flying U Coulee J. G. Whitmore owned outright. Another mile he held under

no other title save a fence. The creek flowed through it all—but that creek had its source somewhere up near the head of Denson Coulee. J. G. Whitmore had, somewhat to his regret, been unable to claim the whole earth—or, at least, that portion of it—for his own; so when he was constrained to make a choice, he settled himself in the wider, more fertile, coulee, which he thereafter called the Flying U.

It is good policy to locate as near as possible to the source of those erratic little creeks which water certain garden spots of the northern rangeland; but it is also well to choose land that will grow plenty of hay. J. G. Whitmore chose the hay land and trusted that Providence would insure the water supply.

Through all these years, Flying U Creek had never once disappointed him. Denson, who settled in the tributary coulee, had not made any difference in the water supply, and his stock had consisted of thirty or forty head of cattle and a few horses, so that the high, open levels between the Flying U and the river had been practically given over to the Flying U cattle and horses.

When Denson sold, however, things might be different. And if he had sold to a sheepman, things might be unpleasantly different. If he had sold to Dunk Whittaker—the Flying U boys faced that possibility just as they would face any other disaster: undaunted, but grim and unsmiling.

It was thus that Pink and Weary rode slowly down into Denson Coulee. Two miles back, they had passed the band of Dot sheep, feeding leisurely just without the Flying U fence, which was their southern boundary. The bug killer and the other were there, and they noted that the features of that other bore witness to the truth of Andy's story. He regarded them with one perfectly good eye and one which was not nearly so good, and grinned a swollen grin.

The two rode ten paces past him, when Pink pulled up suddenly. "I'm going to get off and lick that son of a gun myself, just for luck," he stated

dispassionately. "I'm going to lick 'em both," he revised, while he dismounted.

"Oh come on, Cadwolloper," Weary dissuaded. "You'll likely have all the excitement you need, without——"

"Here, you hold this fool cayuse. No," he shook his head, cutting short further protest. "You're the boss, and you don't want to mix in. But I ain't responsible—and I sure am going to take a fall or two out of these geezers. They're a-w-l-together too stuck on themselves to suit me." Pink did not say that he was thinking of Andy, but, nevertheless, a vivid recollection of that unfortunate young man's rope-creased wrists and swollen hands sent him toward the herder with long, eager strides.

Pink was not tall, and he was slight and boyish of build; also, his cherubic face, topped by tawny curls and lighted by eyes as deeply blue and as innocent as a baby's, probably deceived that herder, just as they had deceived many another. For Pink was a good deal like a stick of dynamite wrapped in white tissue paper and tied with blue ribbon. Weary was not at all uneasy over the outcome as he watched Pink go clanking back, though he loved him well.

Pink did not waste any time or words on the preliminaries. With a delightful frankness of purpose, he pulled off his coat as he came up, sent his hat after it, and arrived fist first.

The herder, who had waited, grinning, and had shouted something to Weary about spanking the kid, if Weary didn't make him behave, speedily became a very surprised herder, and a distressed one as well.

"All right," Pink remarked, a little quick-breathed, when the herder decided for the third time to get up. "A friend of mine worked yuh over a little this morning, and I just thought I'd make a better job than he did. Your eyes didn't match. They will now. When you get 'em open again, maybe you'll see where to head in at."

The herder mumbled maledictions after him, but Pink would not even give him the satisfaction of resenting them.

"I like to have broken a knuckle

against his teeth, darn him!" he observed ruefully, when he was in the saddle again. "Come on, Weary. It won't take but a minute to hand a punch or two to that bug killer, and then I'll feel better. They've both got it coming—come on!" This because Weary showed a strong inclination to take the trail and keep it to his destination. "Well, I'll go, anyway. I've got to kinda square myself for the way. I threw it into Andy; and you know blamed well, Weary, they played it low down on him, or they'd never have got that rope on him. And I'm going to lick that——"

"Mamma! You sure are a rambunctious person when you feel that way," Weary made querulous comment, but he rode over with Pink to where the bug killer was standing, with his long stick held in a somewhat menacing manner, and he held Pink's horse for him.

Pink was gone longer this time, and he came back with a cut lip and a large lump on his forehead; the bug killer had thrown a small rock with a precision which comes of much practice—such as stoning disobedient dogs, and the like—and when Pink rushed at him furiously, he caught him very neatly alongside the head with the stick. These little amenities serving merely to whet Pink's appetite for battle, he stopped long enough to thrash that particular herder very thoroughly and to his own complete satisfaction.

"Well, I guess I'm ready to go on now," he observed, dimpling rather one-sidedly as he got back on his horse.

"I thought maybe you'd want to whip the dogs, too," Weary told him dryly, which was the nearest he came to expressing any disapproval of the incident. Weary was a peace-loving soul, whenever peace was compatible with self-respect, and it would never have occurred to him to punish strange men as summarily as Pink had done.

"I would, if the dogs was half as ornery as the men," Pink retorted. "Say, they hang together like bull snakes and rattlers, don't they? If they was human they'd have helped each other out—but nothing doing! Do you

reckon a man could ride up to a couple of *our* bunch, and thrash one at a time without the other fellow having something to say about it?" He turned in the saddle and looked back. "So help me Josephine, I've got a good mind to go back and lick 'em again, for not hanging together like they ought to."

However, he did not, and they went on to Denson's, Weary still with that anxious look in his eyes, and Pink quite complacent over his exploit. In Denson Coulee was an unwonted atmosphere of activity; heretofore, the place had been animated chiefly by young Densons engaged in the pursuit of pleasure, but now a covered buggy, coming to a stop at the stable, bore mute witness to the new order of things. There were many horses about the place, a covered wagon or two, three or four men working upon the corral, and, lastly, there was one whom Weary, at least, recognized the moment he caught sight of him.

"Looks like a sheep outfit, all right," he said somberly. "And if that ain't old Dunk himself, it's the devil—and that's next thing to him."

Dunk it was who had just arrived, along with another man whom they did not know; a tall man with light hair which hung lank to his collar, a thin, sharp-nosed face, a wide mouth, which stretched easily into a smile, but which was none the pleasanter for that. When he turned inquiringly toward them, they saw that he was stoop-shouldered, not from any deformity, but from sheer, slouching lankness. Dunk gave them a swift, sour look from under his eyebrows, and went on.

Weary rode straight on, past the lank man, whom he judged to be Oleson, until he overtook Dunk Whittaker himself.

"Hello, Dunk," he said cheerfully, sliding over in the saddle so that a foot hung free of the stirrup, as men who ride much have learned to do when they stop for a chat, thereby resting while they may. "Back on the old stamping ground, are yuh?"

"Since you see me here, I suppose I am," Dunk made churlish response.

"Do you happen to own those Dot sheep, back here on the hill?" Weary tilted his head toward home.

"I happen to own half of them." By then they had reached the gate, so that Weary could ride no farther; Dunk started through, and on to the house.

"Oh, don't be in a rush—come on back and be sociable," Weary called out, in the mildest of tones, twisting the reins around his saddle horn so that he might roll a cigarette at ease.

Dunk remembered, perhaps, certain things he had learned when he was J. G.'s partner, and had more or less to do with the charter members of the Happy Family. He came back and stood by the gate, ungraciously enough, to be sure; still, he came back, and Weary smiled secretly under cover of lighting his cigarette. Dunk, by that reluctant compliance, betrayed something which Weary had been rather anxious to know.

"We've been having a little trouble with those Dots," Weary remarked casually between puffs. "You've got some poor excuses herding them. They drove the bunch across our coulee just exactly three times. There ain't enough grass left in our lower field to graze a prairie dog." He glanced back to see where Pink was, discovered that he was right behind him, as was the lank man, and spoke in a tone that included them all.

"The Flying U ain't pasturing sheep this spring," he informed them pleasantly. "But, seeing the grass is eat up, we'll let yuh pay for it. Why didn't you bring them in along the trail, anyway?"

"I didn't bring them in. I just came down from Butte to-day. I suppose the herders brought them out where the feed was best; they did, if they're worth their wages."

"They happened to strike some feed that was pretty expensive. And," he smiled down at Whittaker misleadingly, "you ought to keep an eye on those herders, or they might let you in for another grass bill. The Flying U has got quite a lot of range right around here, you recollect. And we've got plenty of cattle to eat it. We don't need

any help to keep the grass down so we can ride through it."

"Now, look here," began the lank man, with that sort of persuasiveness which can turn instantly into bluster. "All this is pure foolishness, you know. We're here to stay. We've bought this place, and some other land to go with it, and we expect to stay right here and make a living. It happens that we expect to make a living off of sheep. Now, we don't want to start in by quarreling with our neighbors, and we don't want our neighbors to quarrel with us——"

"Mamma! You're taking a fine and dandy way to make us love yuh," Weary cut in ironically. "I know what you want. You want the same as every other meek and lovely sheepman wants: You want it all—core, seeds, and peeling. Dunk," he said, with more impatient disgust than he was in the habit of showing for his fellow men, "this man's a stranger; but I should think you'd know better than to come in here with sheep."

"I don't know why a sheep outfit isn't exactly as good as a cow outfit, and I don't know why they haven't as much right here. You're welcome to what land you own, but it always seemed to me that public land is open to the use of the public. Now, as Oleson says, we expect to raise sheep here, and we expect your outfit to leave us alone. As far as our sheep crossing your coulee is concerned—I don't know that they did. But if they did, and if they did any damage, let J. G. do the talking about that. I deal with the owners—not with hired men."

Weary, you must understand, was never a bellicose young man. But, for all that, he leaned over and gave Dunk a slap on the jaw which must have stung considerably—and the full reason for it lay four years behind the two, when Dunk was part owner of the Flying U and when his sneering arrogance had been very hard to endure.

"Are you going to swallow that—from a *hired man*?" he inquired, after a minute during which nothing whatever occurred beyond the slow reddening of Dunk's face.

"I'm not going to fight, if that's what you mean," Dunk sneered. "I decline to bring myself down to your level. One doesn't expect anything from a jackass but a bray, you know—and one doesn't feel compelled to bray because the jackass does." He smiled that supercilious smile which Weary had hated of old, and which he knew was well used to covering much treachery and small meannesses of various sorts.

"As I said, if the Flying U has any claim against us, let the owner present it in the usual way." Dunk drew down his black brows, lifted a corner of his lip, and turned his back deliberately upon them.

Oleson hesitated a moment, and let himself through the gate, which he closed carefully behind him. "I'm sorry you fellows seem to want to make trouble," he said, without looking up from the latch, which seemed somewhat out of repair, like the rest of the Denson property. "That's a poor way to start in with new neighbors." He lifted his hat with what Pink considered insulting politeness, and followed Dunk to the house.

Weary waited there until they had gone in and closed the door, then turned and rode back home again, frowning thoughtfully at the trail ahead of them all the way, and making no reply to Pink's importunings for war.

"I'd hate to say you've lost your nerve, Weary," Pink cried, at last, in sheer desperation. "But why the devil didn't you get down and thump the daylight out of that black devil? I came pretty near walking into him myself, only I hate to buy in on another fellow's scrap. But if I'd known you were going to set there and let him walk off with that sneer on his face——"

"I can't fight a man that won't hit back," Weary protested quietly. "You couldn't, either, Cadwolloper. You'd have done just what I did; you'd have let him go."

"He will hit back, all right enough," Pink retorted passionately. "He'll do it when you ain't looking, though. He ain't——"

"I know it," Weary sighed. "I'm

sorry I slapped him. He'll hit back—but he won't hit me; he'll aim at the outfit. If the Old Man was here, or Chip, I'd feel a whole lot easier in my mind."

"They couldn't do anything you can't do," Pink assured him loyally, forgetting his own petulance when he saw the look in Weary's face. "All they can do is gobble all the range around here—and I guess there's a few punchers that will have a word or two to say about that."

"What makes me sore," Weary confided, "is knowing that Dunk isn't thinking altogether of the dollar end of it. He's tickled to death to get a whack at the outfit. And I hate to see him get away with it. But I guess we'll have to stand for it."

That sentiment did not please Pink; nor, when Weary repeated it later that evening in the bunk house, did it please the Happy Family. The less pleasing it was because it was perfectly true, and every man of them knew it. Beyond keeping the sheep off Flying U land, there was nothing they could do without stepping over the line into lawlessness—and, while they were not in any sense a meek Happy Family, they were far more law-abiding than their conversation, that night, made them appear.

CHAPTER VII.

The next week was a time of harassment for the Flying U; a week filled to overflowing with petty irritations, traceable, directly or indirectly, to their new neighbors, the Dot sheepmen. The band in charge of the bug chaser and that other unlovable man from Wyoming, fed just as close to the Flying U boundary as their guardians dared let them feed. A great deal closer than was good for the tempers of the Happy Family, who rode fretfully here and there upon their own business, at the same time, and tried to keep an eye upon their unsavory neighbors—a proceeding as nerve-racking as it was futile.

The Native Son, riding home in

jingling haste from Dry Lake, whither he had hurried one afternoon in the hope of cheering news from Chicago, reported another large band of Dot sheep on the wide level beyond Antelope Coulee. There were, he said, four men in charge of the band, and he believed they carried guns, though he was not positive of that. They were moving slowly, as was proper under the circumstances, and he thought they would not attempt to cross Flying U Coulee before the next day; though from the course they were taking he was sure they meant to cross.

Coupled with that bit of ill tidings, the brief note from Chip, saying very little about the Old Man but implying a good deal by its very omissions, was enough to send the Happy Family to sleepless beds that night, if they had been the kind to endure with silent fortitude their troubles.

"If you fellers would back me up," brooded Big Medicine, down by the corral after supper, "I'd see to it them sheep never gits across the coulee, by cripes! I'd send 'em so far the other way they'd git plumb turned around and forgit they ever wanted to go south."

"It's all Dunk's devilishness," Jack Bates declared. "He could take them in the other way, even if the feed ain't so good along the trail. It's most all prairie-dog towns—but that's good enough for sheep." Jack, in his intense partisanship, spoke as if sheep were not entitled to decent grass, at any time or under any circumstances.

"Them herders packin' guns looks to me like they're goin' to make trouble if they kin," gloomed Happy Jack. "I betche they'll kill somebody before they're through. When sheepmen gits mean——"

Pink picked up his rope and started for the large corral, where a few saddle horses had been driven in, just before supper, and had not yet been turned out.

"You fellows can stand around and chew the rag, if you want to," he said caustically, "and wait for Weary to make a war talk. But I'm going to keep

cases on them Dots, if I have to stand an all-night guard on 'em. I don't blame Weary; he's looking out for the law-and-order business—and that's all right. But I'm not in charge of the outfit. I'm going to do as I darn' please, and if they don't like my style, they can give me my time."

"Good for you, Little One!" Big Medicine hurried to overtake him so that he might slap him on the shoulder with his favorite sledge-hammer method of signifying his approval of a man's sentiments. "Honest to grandma, I was jest b'ginnin' to think this bunch was gitting all streaked up with yeller. Course, we ain't goin' to wait for no official orders, by cripes! I'd ruther lock Weary up in the blacksmith shop than let him tell us to go ahead. Go awn and tell him a good stiff lie, Andy—jest to keep him interested while us fellers make a git-away. He ain't in on this; we don't want him in on it."

"What yuh goin' to do?" Happy Jack inquired suspiciously. "Yuh better not go and monkey with them sheep, er them herders. They ain't on our land. And if yuh don't git killed, old Dunk'll fix yuh like he fixed the Gordon boys. I know *him*—to a fare-you-well. It'd tickle him to death to git something on us fellers. I betche that's what he's aimin' t' do. Git us to fightin' his outfit so's't he can send us——"

"Oh, go off and lie down!" Andy implored him contemptuously. "We're going to hang those herders, and drive the sheep all over a cut bank, and then we're going over and murder old Dunk, if he's at home, and burn the house to hide the guilty deed. And if the sheriff comes snooping around asking disagreeable questions, we'll all swear you done it. So now you know our plans, shut your face and go on to bed. And be sure," he added witheringly, "you pull the soogans over your head, so you won't hear the dying shrieks of our victims. We're liable to get kinda excited and torture 'em a while before we kill 'em."

"Aw, g'wan!" gulped Happy Jack mechanically. "You make me sick! If

yuh think I'm goin' to swaller all that, you're away off! You wouldn't dast do nothing of the kind; and, if yuh did, you'd sure have a sweet time layin' it onto me!"

"Oh, I don't know," drawled the Native Son, with a slow, velvet-eyed glance. "I knew a man down in the lower part of California who was arrested, tried, and hanged for murder, and all the evidence there was against him was the fact that he was seen within five miles of the place on the same day the murder was committed—and his face. They had an expert physiognomist there, and he swore that the fellow had the face of an inherited murderer; the poor devil looked like a criminal—and, though he had one of the best lawyers on the coast, it was *adios* for him."

"I s'pose you mean I got the face of a criminal" spluttered Happy Jack. "It ain't the purty fellers that wins out—like you 'n' Pink. I never seen the purty man yit that was worth the powder it'd take to blow him up! Aw, you fellers makes me sick!" He went off, muttering his opinion of them all, and particularly of the Native Son, who smiled while he listened. "You go awn and start something—and you'll wisht you hadn't," they heard him croak from the big gate, and chuckled over his wrath.

As a matter of fact, the Happy Family, as a whole or as individuals, had no intention of committing any great violence that evening. Pink wanted to see just where this new band of sheep was spending the night, and to find out, if possible, what were the herders' intentions. Since the boys were all restless under their worry, and since there is a contagious element in seeking a trouble zone, none save Happy Jack, who was "sore" at them all, and Weary, who was clinging steadfastly to his sense of responsibility, stayed behind in the coulee with old Patsy while the others rode away up the grade and out toward Antelope Coulee beyond.

They meant only to reconnoiter, and to warn the herders against attempting to cross Flying U Coulee. They were

not exactly sure that they would be perfectly polite, or that they would confine themselves rigidly to the language they were wont to employ at dances. Andy Green in particular seemed rather to look forward with pleasure to the meeting. Andy, by the way, had remained heartbrokenly passive during that whole week, because Weary had extracted from him a promise to postpone any attempt to wreak vengeance on his enemies, which Andy, mendacious as he had the name of being, felt constrained to keep intact—though of a truth it irked him much to think of two sheep-herders walking abroad unpunished for their outrage upon his person.

Weary, as he had made plain to them all, wanted to avoid trouble if it were possible to do so. And, though they grinned together in secret over his own affair with Dunk—which was not, in their opinion, exactly in the interests of peace—they meant to respect his wishes as far as human nature was able to do so. So that the Happy Family, galloping toward a red sunset and the great, gray blot on the prairie just where the glory of the west tinged the grass blades crimson, were not one-half as bloodthirsty as they appeared to be.

While they were yet afar off they could see two men walking slowly in the immediate vicinity of the huddled band. A hundred yards away was a small tent, with a couple of horses picketed near by and feeding placidly. The men turned, gazed long at their approach, and walked quickly to the tent, which they entered somewhat hastily.

"Look at 'em dodge outa sight, will you!" cried Cal Emmett, and lifted up his voice in a yell which sometimes accompanied the Happy Family's arrival in Dry Lake after a long, thirsty absence on round-up. Other voices joined in after that first shrill "Ow-ow-ow-eeee!" of Cal's, so that presently the whole lot of them were emitting blood-curdling yells and spurring their horses into a thunder of hoofbeats as they bore down upon the tent. Between howls, they laughed, picturing to themselves

four terrified sheep-herders cowering within those frail canvas walls.

"I'm a rambler, and a gambler, and far from my ho-o-me,
And if yuh don't like me, jest leave me alo-o-ne!"

chanted Big Medicine most horribly, and finished with a yell that almost scared himself, and did set his horse to plunging wildly.

"Come out of there, you lop-eared mutton chewers, and let us pick the wool outa your teeth!" shouted Andy Green, remembering thankfully that this was not breaking his promise to Weary, and yielding to the temptation of coming as close to the guilty persons as he might; for, while these were not the men who had tied and left him alone on the prairie, they belonged to the same outfit, and there was some comfort in giving them a few disagreeable minutes.

Pink, in the lead, was turning to ride around the tent, still yelling, when some one within the tent fired a rifle—and did not aim high. The bullet zipped so close to Big Medicine, who happened to be opposite the crack between the tent flaps, that it tore the leather covering on top of his saddle horn.

The hand of Big Medicine jerked back to his hip. Quick as he was, the Native Son plunged between him and the tent before he could take aim.

"Steady, *amigo*," smiled Miguel. "You aren't a crazy sheep-herder."

"No, but I'm goin' to kill off one. Git outa my way!" Big Medicine was transformed into a cold-eyed, iron-jawed fighting machine. He dug the spurs in, meaning to ride ahead of Miguel. But Miguel's spurs also pressed home, so that the two horses plunged as one. Big Medicine, bellowing one solitary oath, drew his right foot from the stirrup to dismount. Miguel reached out, caught him by the arm, and held him to the saddle. And though Big Medicine was a strong man, the grip held firm and unyielding.

"You must think of the outfit, you know," said Miguel quietly, smiling still. "There must be no shooting. Once that begins——" He shrugged his

shoulders with that slight, eloquent movement which the Happy Family had come to know so well. He was speaking to them all as they crowded up to the scuffle. "The man who feels the trigger itch had better throw his gun away," he advised coolly. "I know, boys. I've seen these things start before. All hell can't stop you, once you begin to shoot. Put it up, Bud, or give it to me."

"The man don't live that can shoot at me, by cripes! and git away with it. Not if he misses killin' me!" Big Medicine was shaking with rage, but the Native Son saw that he hesitated, nevertheless, and laughed outright.

"Call him out and give him a thumping. That's good enough for a sheep-herder," he suggested as a substitute.

Perhaps because the Native Son so seldom offered advice, and because of his cool daring in interfering with Big Medicine at such a time, Bud's jaw relaxed and his pale eyes became more human in their expression. He even permitted Miguel to remove the big, wicked Colt from his hand and slide it into his pocket; whereat the Happy Family gasped with astonishment. Not even Pink would have dreamed of attempting such a thing.

"Well, he's got to come out and take a lickin', anyway," shouted Big Medicine vengefully, and rode close enough to slap the canvas smartly with his quirt. By all the gods he knew by name he called upon the offender to come forth, while the others drew up in a rude half circle to await developments. Heavy silence was the reply he got. It was as though the men within were sitting tense and watchful, like cougars crouched for a spring, with claws unsheathed and muscles quivering.

"You better come out," called Andy sharply, after they had waited a decent interval. "We didn't come out here hunting trouble; we want to know where you're headed for with these sheep. The fellow that got gay with the gun——"

"Aw, don't talk so purty! I'm git-ting almighty tired, just setting here lettin' m' legs hang down. Git your

ropes, boys." With one sweeping gesture of his arm Big Medicine made plain his meaning as he rode a few paces away, his fingers fumbling with the string that held his rope. "I'm goin' to have a look at 'em, anyway," he grinned. "I sure do hate to see men act so bashful."

With his rope free and ready for action, Big Medicine shook the loop out, glanced around, and saw that Andy, Pink, and Cal Emmett were also ready, and with a dexterous flip settled the noose neatly over the iron pin which thrust up through the end of the ridge-pole in front. Andy's loop sank over it a second or two later, and the two wheeled and dashed away together, with Pink and Irish duplicating their performance at the other end of the tent. The dingy, smoke-stained canvas swayed, toppled as the pegs gave way, and finally lay flat upon the prairie fifty feet from where it had stood, leaving exposed to the cruel stare of eight unfriendly cow-punchers four cowering figures with guns in hands that shook.

"Drop them guns!" thundered Big Medicine, flipping his rope loose, and recoiling it mechanically as he plunged up to the group.

One man obeyed. One gave a squawk of terror, and permitted his gun to go off at random before he fled toward the coulee. The other two crouched behind their bed rolls, set their jaws doggedly, and aimed straight as they might at the Happy Family.

Pink, Andy, Irish, Big Medicine, and the Native Son slid off their horses, and made a rush at them. A rifle barked viciously, and Slim, sitting prudently on his horse well in the rear, gave a yell of anguish, and started for home at a rapid pace.

Considering the provocation, the Happy Family behaved with quite praiseworthy self-control and leniency. They did not hang those two herders. They did not kill them either by bullets, knives, or beating to death. They took away the guns, however, and they told them with extreme bluntness what sort of men they believed them to be. They defined accurately their position

in society at large, in that neighborhood, and stated what would be their future fate if they persisted in acting with so little caution and common sense.

At Andy Green's earnest behest they also wound them round and round with ropes before they departed, and gave them some very good advice upon the matter of range rules and the herding of sheep, particularly of Dot sheep.

"You're playing big luck, if you only had sense enough to know it," Andy pointed out to the recumbent three before they rode away. "We didn't come over here on the warpath, and if you hadn't got in such a darned hurry to start something you'd be a whole lot more comfortable right now. We rode over to tell yuh not to start them sheep across Flying U Coulee; because, if you do, you're going to have both hands and your hats plumb full uh trouble. It has taken some little time and fussing to get yuh gentled down so we can talk to you, and I sure do hope yuh remember what I'm saying."

"Oh, we'll remember it, all right!" menaced one of the men, lifting his head turtlewise that he might glare at the group. "And our bosses'll remember it; you needn't worry about that none. You wait till——"

The man next him turned his head and muttered a sentence, and the speaker dropped his head back upon the ground, silenced.

"It was your own outfit started this style of rope trimming, so you can't kick about that part of the deal," Pink informed them melodiously. "It's liable to get to be all the rage with us. So if you don't like it, don't come around where we are. And say"—his dimples stood deep in his cheeks—"you send those ropes home to-morrow, will yuh? We're liable to need 'em."

"And yuh better not wait till we come after 'em, by cripes!" Big Medicine bawled. "What say we haze them sheep a few miles north, boys?"

"Oh, I guess they'll be all right where they are," Andy protested, his thirst for revenge assuaged at sight of those three trussed as he had been trussed, and apparently not liking it any better

than he had liked it. "They'll be good and careful not to come around the Flying U—or I miss my guess a mile."

The others cast comprehensive glances at their immediate surroundings, and decided that they had at least made their meaning plain. There was no occasion for emphasizing their disapproval any farther. They confiscated the rifles, and they told the fellows why. They very kindly pulled a tarpaulin over the three to protect them in a measure from the chill night that was close upon them, and they wished them good night and pleasant dreams, and rode away home.

On the way they met Weary and Happy Jack, galloping anxiously to the battle scene. Slim, it appeared from Weary's rapid explanation, had arrived at the ranch with his horse in a lather, and with a four-inch furrow in the fleshiest part of his leg. The tale he told had led Weary to believe that Slim was the sole survivor of that reckless company.

"Mamma! I'm so glad to see you boys able to fork your horses and swear natural, that I don't believe I can speak my little piece about staying on your own side the fence, and letting trouble do a little of the hunting," he admitted thankfully. "I wish you'd stayed at home and left these blamed Dots alone. But seeing yuh didn't, I'm tickled to death to hear you didn't kill anybody off. I don't want the folks to come home and find the whole bunch in the pen. It might look as if——"

"You don't want the folks to come home and find the whole ranch sheeped off, either, and the herders campin' in the White House, do yuh?" Pink inquired pointedly. "I kinda think," he added dryly, "those same herders will feel like going around Flying U fences with their sheep. I don't believe they'll do any cutting across."

"I betche old Dunk'll make it interestin' fer this outfit, just the same," Happy Jack predicted. "Tyin' up three men uh hisn like that, and ropin' their tent and draggin' it off, ain't things he'll pass up. He'll have a possey out here—you see if he don't!"

"In that case, I'll be sorry for you, Happy," purred Miguel, close beside him. "You're the only one in the outfit that looks capable of such a vile deed."

"Oh, Dunk won't do anything," Weary said cheerfully. "You'll have to take those guns back, though. They might take a notion to call that stealing."

"You forget," the Native Son reminded calmly, "that we left them three good ropes in exchange."

Whereupon the Happy Family laughed, and went to offer their unsought sympathy to Slim.

CHAPTER VIII.

The boys of the Flying U had many faults in common, aside from certain individual frailties; one of their chief weaknesses was overconfidence in their own ability to cope with any situation which might arise, unexpectedly or otherwise, and a subconscious belief that others felt that same confidence in them, and that enemies were wont to sit a long time counting the cost before venturing to offer any affront.

They believed—and made it manifest in their conversation—that they could even bring the Old Man back to health if they only had him on the ranch where they could get at him. They maligned hospitals and Chicago doctors most unjustly, and were agreed that all he needed was to be back on the ranch, where somebody could look after him *right*. They frequently asserted that, if they ever got tired of living, and wanted to cash in without using a gun or anything, they'd go to a hospital, and tell the doctors to turn loose and try to cure them of something.

This, by way of illustration; also as an explanation of their sleeping soundly that night instead of watching for some hostile demonstration on the part of the Dot outfit. To a man—one never counted Happy Jack's prophecies of disaster as being anything more than a personal deformity of thought—they were positive in their belief that the Dot would be very, very careful not to pro-

voke the Happy Family to further manifestations of disapproval. They knew what they'd get if they tried any more funny business. They'd be mighty careful where they drove their sheep after this.

So, with the comfortable glow of victory in their souls, they lay down, and, when the animated discussion of that night's adventure flagged as their tongues grew sleep-clogged and their eyelids drooped, they slept in peace; save when Slim, awakened once and remembering the soreness of his leg, grunted a malediction or two before he began snoring again.

They rose and ate their breakfast in a fair humor with the world. One grows accustomed to the thought of sickness, even when it strikes close to the affections, and with the resilience of youth and hope, life adjusts itself to make room for the specter of fear so that it does not crowd unduly, but stands half forgotten in the background of one's thoughts. For that reason they no longer moved soberly because of the Old Man, lying hurt unto death in Chicago. And when they mentioned the Dot sheep and men, they spoke as men speak of the vanquished.

With the taste of hot biscuits and maple sirup still lingering pleasantly against their palates, they went out and were confronted with sheep; blatting sheep, devastating sheep, Dot sheep. On the south side of the coulee, up on the bluff, grazed the band. They fed upon the brow of the hill opposite the ranch buildings, they squeezed under the fence and spilled a ragged fringe of running, gray animals down the slope. Half a mile away though the nearest of them were, the murmur of them, the smell of them, the whole intolerable presence of them, filled the Happy Family with an amazed loathing too deep for words.

Technically, that high, level stretch of land bounding Flying U Coulee on the south was open range. It belonged to the government. The soil was not fertile enough even for the most optimistic of "dry-land" farmers to locate upon; and this was before the dry-land-farm-

ing craze had swept the country, gathering in all public land as "claims." J. G. Whitmore had contented himself with acquiring title to the whole of Flying U Coulee, secure in his belief that the old order of things would not change, in his lifetime at least, and that the unwritten law of the range land, which leaves the vicinity of a ranch to the use of the ranch owner, would never be repealed by new customs imposed by a new class of people.

Legally, there was no trespassing of the Dots, beyond the two or three hundred which had made their way through the fence. Morally, however, and by right of custom, their offense would not be much greater if they came on down the hill and invaded the Old Man's pet meadows just beyond the "little pasture."

I am not going to pretend to repeat the things they said, once they were released from dumb amazement. Let bare facts suffice.

They saddled in haste, and in haste they rode to the scene. This, they were convinced, was the band herded by the bug killer and the man from Wyoming; and the nerve of those two almost excited the admiration of the Happy Family. It did not, however, deter them from their purpose.

Weary, to look at him, was no longer in the mood to preach patience and a turning of the other cheek. He also made that change of heart manifest in his speech when Pink, his eyes almost black, rode up close and gritted at him:

"Well, what's orders now? Want me to go back and get the wire nippers, so we can let them poor little sheep down into the meadow? Maybe we better ask the herders down to have some uh Patsy's grub, too; I don't believe they had time to cook much breakfast. And it wouldn't be a bad idea to haze our stuff clear off the range. I'm afraid Dunk's sheep are going to fare kinda slim if we go on letting our cattle eat all the good grass!" Pink did not often indulge in such lengthy sarcasm, especially toward his beloved Weary. But his exasperation toward Weary's mild tactics had been growing apace.

Weary's reply, I fear, will have to be omitted. It was terribly unrefined.

"I'm going to haze these sheep just as far south as they can get without taking to water," was his first printable utterance. "The Washbowl is a good place for 'em. Don't get all het up chasing 'em yourself. We'll make the men that's paid for it do the driving."

"And if they don't go," drawled the smooth voice of the Native Son, "what shall we do, *amigo*? Slap them on the wrist?"

Weary twisted in the saddle, and sent him a baleful glance, which was not at all like Weary the sunny-hearted.

"If you can't figure that out for yourself," he snapped, "you better go back and wipe the dishes for Patsy; and when that's done, you can pull the weeds out of his radishes. Maybe he'll give you a nickel to buy candy with, if you do it good." Before he faced to the front again his harsh glance swept the faces of his companions.

They were grinning, every man of them, and he knew why. To see him lose his temper was something of an event with the Happy Family. They used sometimes to fix the date of an incident by saying: "It was right after that time Weary got mad, a year ago last fall," or something of the sort. He grinned himself shamefacedly, and told them that they were a bunch of no-account cusses, anyway, and he'd just about as soon herd sheep himself as have to run with such an outfit; which swept his anger from him, and left him his usual self, with but the addition of a purpose from which nothing could stay him. He was going to settle the sheep question, and he was going to settle it that day.

Only one injunction did he lay upon the Happy Family. "You fellows don't want to get excited and go to shooting," he warned, while they were still out of hearing of the herders. "We don't want Dunk to get anything like that on us; savvy?"

They "savvied," and they told him so, each after his own individual manner.

"I guess we ought to be able to put the run on a couple of sheep-herders,

without using our hardware," Pink said loftily, remembering his meeting with them a week or so ago.

"One thing sure—we'll make a good job of it this time," promised Irish, and spurred after Weary, who was leading the way around the band.

The herders watched them openly, and with the manner of men who are expecting the worst to happen. Unlike the four whose camp had been laid low the night before, these two were unarmed as they had been from the first; which, in Weary's opinion, was simply a bit of guile upon the part of Dunk. If trouble came—trouble which it would take a jury to settle—the fact that the sheepmen were unarmed would tell heavily in their favor; for while the petty meanness of range stealing and nagging trespass may be harder to bear than the flourishing of a gun before one's face, it all sounds harmless enough in the telling.

Weary headed straight for the nearest herder, told him to put his dogs to work rounding up the sheep, which were scattered over an area half a mile across while they fed, and when the herder, who was the bug killer, made no move to obey, Weary deliberately pulled his gun, and pointed it at his head.

"You move," he directed, with grim intent. "Be kinda careful, and don't take too much time about it, either."

The bug killer, an unkempt, ungainly figure standing with his back to the morning sun, scowled up at Weary stolidly.

"Yuh *dassent* shoot!" he stated sourly, and did not move.

For answer, Weary pulled back the hammer with his thumb. Also, he smiled as malignantly as it was in his nature to do, and hoped in his heart that he looked sufficiently terrifying to convince the man.

Big Medicine had not been saying much on the way over, which was unusual. Now he rode forward until he was abreast of Weary, and he grinned down at the bug killer in a way to distract his attention from the gun.

"Nobody don't have to shoot, by cripes!" Big Medicine bawled. "We

hain't goin' to kill yuh. You're liable to wish we had, though, b'fore we git through. Git to work, boys, 'n' gether up some dry grass an' sticks. Over 'here in them rosebushes y' oughta find enough bresh. We'll give him a taste ah what we was talkin' about comin' over, by cripes! I guess he'll be willin' to drive sheep, all right, when we git through with him. Haw, haw, *haw-w-w!*" He leaned forward in the saddle and ogled the bug killer with horrid significance.

"Git busy with that bresh!" he yelled again authoritatively, when a glance showed him that the Happy Family was hesitating and eying him uncertainly. "Git a fire goin' quick's yuh kin—I'll do the rest. Down in Coconino County we used to have a way uh fixin' sheep-herders——"

"Aw, g'wan! We don't want no torture business!" remonstrated Happy Jack uneasily, edging away.

"Yuh don't, hey?" Big Medicine turned in the saddle wrathfully and glared. When he had succeeded in catching Andy Green's eye he winked, and that young man's face kindled understandingly. "Well, now, you hain't runnin' this here show. Honest to grandma, I've saw the time when a little foot-warmin' done a sheep-herder a whole lot uh good; and it looks to me, by cripes, as if this here feller's troubled with cold feet. You git the fire started. That's all I want you t' do, Happy. Some uh you boys help me rope him—like him and that other jasper over there done to Andy. C'm on, Andy—it ain't goin' to take long!"

"You bet your sweet life I'll come on!" exclaimed Andy, dismounting eagerly. "Let me take your rope, Weary. Too bad we haven't got a branding iron——"

"Aw, we don't need no irons." Big Medicine was also on the ground by then; and untying his rope. "Lemme git his shoes off oncet, and I'll show yuh."

The bug killer lifted his stick, snarling like a mongrel dog when a stranger tries to drive it out of the house; hurled the stick at them hysterically as Big

Medicine, rope in hand, advanced implacably, and with a squawk of horror turned suddenly and ran. After him, bellowing terrible threats, lunged Big Medicine, straight through the band like a snowplow, leaving behind them a wide, open trail.

"Say, we kinda overplayed that bet, by gracious!" Andy commented to Weary while he watched the chase. "That gazabo's scared silly; let's try the other one. That torture talk works fine."

In his enthusiasm Andy remounted, and was about to lead the way to the other herder, when Big Medicine returned, puffing, the bug killer squirming in his grasp. "Tell him what yuh want him to do, Weary," he panted, with some difficulty holding his limp victim upright by a greasy coat collar. "And if he don't fall all over himself doin' it, why—by cripes—we'll *take off his shoes!*"

Whereupon the bug killer gave a howl, and professed himself eager to drive the sheep anywhere they liked.

"That's all right, then. Start 'em south, and don't quit till somebody tells you to." Weary carefully let down the hammer of his six-shooter, and shoved it thankfully into its scabbard.

"Now, you don't want to pile it on quite so thick next time," Irish admonished Big Medicine, when they turned away from watching the bug killer set his dogs to work by gestures and a shouted word or two. "You like to have sent this one plumb nutty."

"I betche Bud gits us all pinched for that," grumbled Happy Jack. "Torturing folks is purty darned serious business. Yuh might as well smoke 'em up decent."

"Haw, haw, *haw-w-w!*" Big Medicine goggled the group mirthfully. "Nobody can't swear I done a thing, or said a thing. All I said was I'd take off his shoes. Any jury in the country 'd know that there would be a hull lot worse fer us than it would fer him, by cripes. Haw, haw, *haw-w-w!*"

"Say, that's right, by golly! Yuh didn't *say* nothin', ner *do* nothin'. By golly, that was purty slick work, all

right!" Slim forgot his sore leg until he slapped his hand enthusiastically down upon the place as comprehension of Bud's finesse dawned upon him. He yelped, and the Happy Family laughed unfeelingly.

"You want to be careful, and don't try to see through any jokes, Slim, till that leg uh yours gets well," Irish bantered, and they laughed the louder.

All this was mere byplay; a momentary swinging of their mood to pleasantry, because they were a temperamentally cheerful lot, and laughter came to them easily, as it always does to youth and perfect mental and physical health. But their brief hilarity over Slim's misfortune did not soften the mood of them toward their adversaries. They were unsmiling and unfriendly when they reached the man from Wyoming, and if they ever behaved like boys let out of school, they did not show it then.

The Wyoming man was wiser than his fellow. He had been given several minutes' grace in which to meditate upon the unwisdom of defiance; and he had seen from afar the bug killer's abrupt change from sullenness to terror, and afterward to abject obedience. He did not know what they had said to him, or what they had done; but he knew the bug killer was a hard man to stampede. And he was one man, and they were many; also he judged that, being human, and this being the third offense of the Dot sheep under his care, it would be extremely unsafe to trust that their indignation would vent itself in mere words.

Wherefore, when Weary told him to get the stragglers back through the fence and up on the level, he stopped only long enough for a good look at their faces. After that he called his dogs, and climbed through the fence.

It really did not require the entire Family to force that band south that morning. But Weary's jaw was set, as was his heart, upon a thorough cleaning of that particular bit of range; and since he did not definitely request any man to turn back, and since every fellow there was minded to see the thing to a finish, they straggled out behind the

trailing two thousand—and never had one bunch of sheep so efficient a convoy.

After the first few miles the way grew rough. Sheep lagged, and the blatting increased to an uproar. Dry ewes and yearlings, these were, and ten days on good grass had put them in prime condition. So Weary was merciless, and drove them forward as fast as herders and dogs could push them along, until the first jumble of hills and deep-worn gullies held them back from easy traveling.

But the Happy Family had not ridden those breaks for cattle, all these years, to be hindered by rough going. Weary, when the band stopped and huddled, blatting incessantly, against a sheer wall of sandstone and gravel, got the herders together, and told them what he wanted.

"You take 'em down that slope, till you come to the second little coulee. Don't go up the first one—that's a blind pocket. In the second coulee, up a mile or so, there's a spring creek. You can let 'em hold 'em there on water for half an hour or so. That's more than any of yuh deserve. Haze 'em down there."

The herders did not know it, but that second coulee was the rude gateway to an intricate system of high ridges and winding waterways that would later be dry as a bleached bone—the real beginning of the bad lands which border the Missouri River for long, terrible miles. Down there it is possible for two men to reach places where they may converse quite easily across a chasm, and yet be compelled to ride fifteen or twenty miles, perhaps, in order to shake hands. Yet even in that scrap heap of nature there are ways of passing deep into the heart of the upheaval.

The Happy Family knew those ways as they knew the most complicated figures of the quadrilles they danced so light-footedly with the girls of the Bear Paw country. When they forced the sheep and their herders out of the coulee Weary had indicated, he sent Irish and Pink ahead to point the way, and he told them to head for the Washbowl; which they did with praise—

worthy zeal and scant pity for the sheep, or for those two who walked.

When at last, after a heartbreaking climb up a long, bare ridge, Pink and Irish paused upon the brow of a slope, and let the trail-weary band spill itself reluctantly down the steep slope beyond, the sun stood high in the blue above them, and their stomachs clamored for food; by which signs they knew that it must be near noon.

When the last sheep had passed, plaintively complaining, down the bluff, Weary halted the sweating herders for a parting admonition.

"We don't aim to deal you any more misery for a while, if you stay where you're at. You're only working for a living, like the rest of us—but I must say I don't admire your trade none. Anyway, I'll see that your camp tender is piloted down here with your outfit. This is good enough range for sheep. You keep away from the Flying U with your darned sheep, and nobody'll bother you. Over there in them trees," he added, pointing a gloved finger toward a little grove on the far side of the basin, "you'll find a cabin. And water. And farther down the river there's pretty good grass, in the little bottoms. Now, git!"

The herders looked as if they would enjoy murdering them all, but they did not say much. With their panting dogs at heel, they scrambled down the bluff in the wake of their sheep, and the Happy Family, rolling cigarettes while they watched them depart, told one another that this settled *that* bunch; they wouldn't try to bed down in the Flying U dooryard that night, anyway.

CHAPTER IX.

Hungry, with the sharp, gnawing hunger of healthy stomachs accustomed to regular and generous feeding; tired, with the weariness of healthy muscles pushed past their accustomed limit of action; and hot with the unaccustomed heat of a blazing day shunted unaccountably into the midst of soft spring weather, the Happy Family rode out of the embrace of the last barren coulee

and up on the wide level where the breeze swept gratefully up from the west, and where every day brought with it a deeper tinge of green into its grassy carpet.

Only for this harassment of the Dot sheep, the round-up wagons would be loaded and ready to rattle abroad over the land. Meadow larks and curlews and little, pert-eyed ground sparrows called out to them that round-up time was come. They passed a bunch of feeding Flying U cattle, and flat-ribbed, long-legged calves galloped in brief panic to their mothers, and from the sanctuary of grass-filled paunches watched the riders with wide, inquisitive eyes.

"We ought to be starting out, by now," Weary observed a bit gloomily to Andy and Pink, who rode upon either side of him. "The calf crop is going to be good, if this weather holds on another two weeks or so. But——" he waved his cigarette disgustedly—"that darned Dot outfit would run all over the place if we pulled out on round-up, and left 'em the run of things." He smoked moodily for a minute. "My religion has changed a lot in the last couple uh weeks," he observed whimsically. "My idea of hell is a place where there ain't anything but sheep and sheep-herders; and cow-punchers have got to spend thousands uh years right in the middle of the corals."

"In that case, I'd pass up the dying proposition altogether," Andy Green asserted emphatically. "I'll take the brimstone lake in mine, every time."

"What worries me," Weary confided, obeying the impulse to talk over his troubles with those who sympathized, "is how I'm going to keep the work going along like it ought to, and at the same time keep them Dot sheep outa the house. Dunk's wise, all right. He knows enough about the cow business to know we've got to get out on the range pretty quick, now. And he's just that mean, that every day or every half day he can feed his sheep on Flying U grass, he calls that much to the good. And he knows we won't go to opening

up any real gun fights if we can get out of it. He knows the Old Man and Chip are gone, and he knows we've just naturally got to sit back and swallow our tongues because we haven't any authority.

"Mamma! It comes pretty tough, when a low-down skunk like that just *banks* on your doing the square thing. He wouldn't do it, but he knows you will; and so he takes advantage of white men and gets the best of 'em. And if we *should* happen to break out and do something, he knows the herders would be the ones to get it; and he'd wait till the dust settled, and bob up with the sheriff——" He waved his hand again with a hopeless gesture.

"It may not look that way on the face of it," he added gloomily, "but Dunk has got us right where he wants us. From the way they've been letting sheep on our land, time and time again, I'd gamble he's just *trying* to make us so mad we'll break out. He's got it in for the whole outfit, from the Old Man and the Little Doctor, down. If any of us boys got into trouble, the Old Man would spend his last cent to clear us; and Dunk knows that just as well as he knows the way from the house to the stable. He'd see to it that it would just about *take* his last cent, too. And he's using these Dot sheep like you'd use a red flag on a bull, to make us so crazy mad we'll kill off somebody.

"That's why," he said to them all, when he saw that they had ridden up close that they might hear what he was saying, "I've been hollering so loud for the meek-and-mild stunt. When I slapped him on the jaw, and he stood there and took it, I saw his game. He had a witness to swear I hit him and he didn't hit back. And when I saw them Dots in our field again, I knew, just as well as if Dunk had told me, that he was kinda hoping we'd kill a herder or two, so he could cinch us good and plenty. I don't say," he qualified, with a rueful grin, "that Dunk went into the sheep business to just to get r-revenge, as they say in shows. But if he can make money running sheep—and he can, all right, be-

cause there's more money in sheep, right now, than there is in cattle—and, at the same time, get in a good whack at the Flying U, he's the lad that will sure make a running jump at the chance."

He spat upon the burned end of his cigarette stub from force of the habit that fear of range fires had built, and cast it petulantly from him; as if he would like to have been able to throw Dunk and his sheep problem as easily out of his path.

"So I wish you boys would hang onto yourselves when you hear a sheep blatting under your window," he summed up his unburdening whimsically. "As Bud said this morning, you can't hang a man for telling a sheep-herder you'll take off his shoes. And they can't send us over the road for moving that band of sheep onto a new range to-day. Last night you all were kinda disorderly, maybe, but you didn't hurt anybody, or destroy any property. You see what I mean. Our only show is to stop with our toes on the right side of the dead line."

"If Andy, here, would jest git his think wheels greased and going good," Big Medicine suggested loudly, "he ought to frame up something that would put them Dots on the run permanent. I dunno, by cripes, why it is a feller can always think uh lies and joshes by the dozens, and put 'em across O. K., when there ain't nothing to be made outa it except hard feelin's; and then when a deal like this here sheep deal comes up, he's got about as many idees, by cripes, as that there line-back calf over there. Honest to grandma, Andy makes me feel kinda faint. Only time he did have a chancet, he let them——" It occurred to Big Medicine at that point that perhaps his remarks might be construed by the object of them as being offensively personal. He turned his head and grinned good-naturedly in Andy's direction, and refrained from finishing what he was going to say. "I sure do like them wind flowers scattered all over the ground," he observed, with such deliberate and ostentatious irrele-

vance that the Happy Family laughed, even to Andy Green, who had at first been inclined toward anger.

"Everything," declared Andy, in the tone of a paid instructor, "has its proper time and place, boys; I've told you that before. For instance, I wouldn't try to kill a skunk by talking it to death; and I wouldn't be hopeful of putting the run on this Dunk person by telling him ghost stories. As to ideas—I'm plumb full of them. But they're all about grub, just right at present."

That started Slim and Happy Jack to complaining because no one had sense enough to go back after some lunch before taking that long trail south; the longer because it was a slow one, with sheep to set the pace. By the time they had presented their arguments against the Happy Family, as such, having enough brains to last them overnight, and the Happy Family had indignantly pointed out just where the mental deficiency was most noticeable, they were upon that last broad stretch of "bench" land beyond which lay Flying U and Patsy and dinner; a belated dinner, to be sure, but for that the more welcome.

And when they reached the point where they could look away to the very rim of the coulee, they saw sheep, sheep to the sky line, feeding, scattered and at ease, making the prairie look, in the distance, as if it were covered with a thin growth of gray sagebrush. Four herders moved slowly upon the outskirts, and the dogs were little, scurrying black dots, which stopped occasionally to wait thankfully until the master minds again urged them to endeavor.

The Happy Family drew up, and stared in silence.

"Do I see *sheep*?" Pink inquired plaintively at last. "Tell me, somebody."

"Mamma! It's that bunch you fellows tackled last night," said Weary miserably. "I ought to have had sense enough to leave somebody on the ranch to look out for this."

"They've got their nerve," stated

Irish. "After the deal they got last night, I'd have bet good money that you couldn't drag them herders across Flying U Coulee with a log chain."

"Say, by golly, do we have to drive this here bunch anywheres before we git anything to eat?" Slim wanted to know distressfully.

Weary considered briefly. "No, I guess we'll pass 'em up for the present. An hour or so won't make much difference in the long run, and our horses are about all in right now——"

"So'm I, by cripes!" Big Medicine attested, grinning mirthlessly. "This here sheep business is plumb wearin' on a man. Specially," he added, with a fretful note, "when you've got to handle 'em gentle. The things I'd like to do to them Dots is all ruled outa the game, seems like. Honest to grandma, a little gore would look better to me right now than a Dutch picnic before the foam's all blowed off the refreshments. Lemme kill off jest *one* herder, Weary?" he pleaded. "The one that took a shot at me las' night. Purty please!"

"If you killed one," Weary told him glumly, "you might as well make a clean sweep, and take in the whole bunch."

"Well, I won't charge nothin' extra fer that, either," Bud assured him generously. "I'm willin' to throw in the other three—and the dawgs, too, by cripes!" He goggled the Happy Family quizzically. "Nobody can't say there's anything small about *me*. Why, down in the Coconino country they used to set half a dozen greasers diggin' graves, by cripes, soon as I started in to argy with a man. It was a safe bet they'd need three or four, anyway, if old Bud cut loose onc't. Sheep-herders? Why, they jest natcherly couldn't keep enough on hand, scarcely, to run their sheep. They used to order sheep-herders like they did wool-sacks, by cripes! You could always tell when I was in the country by the number uh extra herders them sheep outfits always kep' in reserve. Honest to grandma, I've knowed two or three outfits to club together and ship in

a carload at a time, when they heard I was headed their way. And so when it comes to killin' off *four*, why, that ain't skurcely enough to make it worth m' while to dirty up m' gun!"

"Aw, I betche yuh never killed a man in your life!" Happy Jack grumbled, in his characteristic tone of disparagement; but such was his respect for Big Medicine's prowess that he took care not to speak loud enough to be overheard by that modest gentleman, who continued with certain fearsome details of alleged murderous exploits of his own down in Coconino County, Arizona.

But as they passed the detested animals, thankful that the trail permitted them to ride by at a distance sufficient to blur the most unsavory details—all these adjectives being used because they harmonize best with the Happy Family's attitude, rather than because of any prejudice against sheep on the part of the chronicler—even Big Medicine gave over his deliberate boastings, and relapsed into silence.

He had begun his fantastic vauntings from an instinctive impulse to leaven with humor a situation which, at the moment, could not be bettered. Just as they had, when came the news of the Old Man's dire plight, sought to push the tragedy of it into the background and cling to their creed of optimism, they had avoided openly facing the sheep complication with mutual admissions of all it might mean to the Flying U.

Until Weary had unburdened his heart of worry on the ride home that day, they had not said much about it, beyond a general vilification of the sheep industry as a whole, of Dunk as the chief of the encroaching Dots, and of the herders personally.

But there were times when they could not well avoid thinking rather deeply upon the subject, even if they did refuse to put their forebodings into speech. They were not children; neither were they to any degree lacking in intelligence. Swearing, about herders and at them, was all very well; bluffing, threatening, pummeling even

with willing fists, tearing down tents and binding men with ropes might serve to relieve the emotions upon occasion. But there was the grim, economic problem which faced squarely the Flying U as a "cow outfit"—the problem of range, and water, for instance; the Happy Family did not call it by name, but they realized to the full what it all meant to the Old Man to have sheep just over his boundary line always.

They realized, too, what it meant to have the Old Man absent at this time—worse, to have him lying in a hospital, likely to die at any moment; what it meant to have the whole responsibility shifted to their shoulders, willing though they might be to bear the burden; what it meant to have the general of an army gone when the enemy was approaching in overwhelming numbers.

Pink, when they were descending the first slope of the bluff which was the southern rim of Flying U Coulee, turned and glared vindictively back at the wavering gray blanket out there to the west. When he faced to the front, his face had the look it wore when he was fighting.

"So help me Josephine!" he gritted desperately, "we've got to clean the range of them Dots before the Old Man comes back or——" He snapped his jaws shut viciously.

Weary turned haggard eyes toward him.

"How?" he asked simply. And Pink had no answer for him.

CHAPTER X.

Patsy, stanch old partisan that he was, placed before them much food which he had tried his best to keep hot without burning everything to a crisp, and while they ate with ravenous haste he told, with German epithets and a trembling lower jaw, of his troubles that day.

"Dose sheeps dey coom by der leetle pasture," he lamented, while he poured coffee muddied from long boiling. "Looks like dey know so soon you ride

away, und dey cooms cheeky as you pleece, und eats der grass und crawls under der fence und leafs der vool shticking by der vires. I goes out mit a club, py cosh, und der sheeps chust looks und valks by some better place alreatty, und I throw rocks und yells till mine neck iss sore.

"Und dose herders dey sets dem by der rock und laugh till I felt like I could kill der whole punch, py cosh! Und von yells, 'Hey, Dutchy, pring me some pie, alreatty!' Und he laughs some more because der sheeps dey don't go away; dey chust run around und eat more grass, and *baa-aa!*"

He turned and went heavily back to the greasy range with the depleted coffee-pot, lifted the lid of a kettle, and looked in upon the contents with a purely mechanical glance; gave a perfunctory prod or two with a long-handled fork, and came back, to stand uneasily behind Weary.

"If you poys are goin' to shtand fer dot," he began querulously, "py cosh I von't! Py myself I vill go und tell dot Dunk W'ittaker vot a low-down skunk I t'ink he iss. *Sheep's vool* shtickin' by der fences effervhere on der ranch, py cosh! Dot would sure kill der Old Man quick if he see it. Shtinkin' off sheeps py our noses all der time, till I can't eat no more mit der shmell off dem. Neffer pefore did I see vool on der Flying U fences, py cosh, und sheeps *baa-aa!* in der coulee."

Never had they seen Patsy take so to heart a matter of mere business import. They did not say much to him; there was not much that they could say. They ate their fill and went out disconsolately to discuss the thing among themselves, away from Patsy's throaty complainings. They hated it as badly as did Patsy; indeed, with Weary's urgent plea for no violence holding them in leash, they hated it more, perhaps.

The Native Son tilted his head unobtrusively stableward when he caught Andy's eye, and as unobtrusively wandered away from the group. Andy stopped long enough to roll and light a cigarette, and then strolled after him with apparent aimlessness, secretly cu-

rious over the summons. He found Miguel in the stable waiting for him, and Miguel led the way, rope in hand, across the corral and into the little pasture where fed a horse he meant to ride. He did not say anything until he had turned to close the gate and glanced back to make sure that they were alone and that their departure had not carried to the Happy Family any betraying air of significance.

"You remember the first time I ever met you?" the Native Son asked abruptly, a^o twinkle in his fathomless eyes. "You put up a good one on the boys that time, you remember. Bluffed them into thinking I was a hero in disguise, and that you'd seen me pull off a big stunt of bullfighting and bull riding down in Mexico. It was a fine josh. They believe it yet."

Andy glanced at him perplexedly. "Yes—and when it turned out to be true," he amended, "the josh was on me, I guess; I thought I was just lying, when I wasn't. I've often wondered about that. By gracious, it makes a man feel funny to frame up a yarn out of his own think machine, and then find out he's been telling the truth all this while. It's like a fellow handing out a twenty-four-carat gold bar to a rube by mistake, under the impression it only looks like one. Of course, they believe it! Only they don't know I just merely hit the truth by accident."

The Native Son smiled his slow, amused smile, that somehow never failed to be impressive. "That's the funny side of it," he drawled. "You didn't. I just piled another little josh on top of yours, is all. I never fought a bull in my life, except maybe in a branding pen. I'd heard a good deal about you, and—well, a fellow likes to go the best one better. And you put that across so smooth and easy, I just simply couldn't resist the temptation to make you think it was all straight goods. Savvy?"

Andy Green stared at him, slack-jawed, but he did not say a word.

"So I think we can both safely consider ourselves top hands when it comes to lying," the Native Son went on.

"And if you're willing to go in with me on it——" He glanced over his shoulder, saw that Happy Jack, on horseback, was coming out to haze in the saddle bunch, and turned to stroll back as lazily as he had come. He continued to speak smoothly and swiftly, in a voice that would not carry ten paces. While Andy Green, with brown head bent attentively, listened eagerly, and added a sentence or two on his own account now and then, and smiled—which he had not been in the habit of doing lately.

"Say, you fellers are gittin' awful energetic, ain't yuh?—wranglin' horses afoot!" Happy Jack bantered at the top of his voice, when he passed them by. "Better save up your strength while you kin. Weary's goin' to set us herdin' sheep ag'in—and I betche there's goin' to be something more'n *herdin'* on our hands before we git through."

"That'll suit me fine," sang out Andy, as cheerfully as if he had been invited to dance "ladies' choice" with the prettiest girl in the crowd. "Wonder what hole he's going to dump *this* bunch into," he added to the Native Son. "By gracious, he ought to send 'em just as far north as he can drive 'em without paying duty! I'd sure take 'em over into Canada, if it was me running the show."

"It was a mistake," the Native Son criticized, "for the whole bunch to go off like we did to-day. They had those sheep up here on the hill just for a bait. They knew we'd go straight up in the air, and come down on those two freaks herding 'em, and that gave them a chance to cross the other bunch. I thought so all along, but I didn't like to butt in."

"Well, Weary's mad enough now to do things that will leave a dent, anyway," Andy commented under his breath, when, from the corral gate, he got a good look at Weary's profile, which showed the set of his mouth and chin. "See that mouth? It's hunt the top rail, and do it quick, when that old boy straightens out his lips like that."

Behind them, Happy Jack bellowed for an open gate, and no obstructions,

and they drew hastily to one side to let the saddle horses gallop past with a great upflinging of dust. Pink, with a quite obtrusive facetiousness, began lustily chanting that it looked to him like a big night to-night, with occasional furtive glances at Weary's face; for he also had been quick to read those close-pressed lips, which did not soften a line in response to the ditty. Usually he laughed at Pink's drollery.

They rode rather quietly up on the hill again, to where fed the sheep. During the hour or so that they had been absent, the sheep had not moved appreciably; they still grazed close enough to the boundary to make their position seem a direct insult to the Flying U, a virtual slap in the face. And these young men who worked for the Flying U and who made its interests right loyally their own, were growing very, very tired of turning the other cheek. With them, the time for profanity and for horseplay bluffing and judicious temporizing was past. There were other lips besides Weary's that were drawn tight and thin when they approached that particular band of sheep. More than one pair of eyes turned inquiringly toward him, and away again when they met no answering look.

They topped a rise of ground, and in the shallow wrinkle which had hidden him until now they came full upon Dunk Whittaker, riding a chunky black, which stepped restlessly about while he conferred in low tones with a couple of the herders. The Happy Family recognized them as two of the fellows in whose safe-keeping they had left their ropes the night before. Dunk looked around quickly when the group appeared over the little ridge, scowled, hesitated, and then came straight toward them.

"I want you rowdies to bring back those sheep you took the trouble to drive off this morning," he began, with the even, grating voice and the sneering lift of lip under his little black mustache which the older members of the Happy Family remembered—and hated—so vividly. "I've stood just—all—I'm—going to stand, of these typical

Flying U performances you've been indulging in so freely during the past two weeks. It's all very well to terrorize a neighborhood of long-haired rubes, who don't know enough to teach you your places; but interfering with another man's property is——"

"Interfering with another—*what?*" Big Medicine, his pale-blue eyes standing out more like a frog's than ever upon his face, gave his horse a kick and lunged up that he might lean and thrust his red face close to Dunk's. "Another *what?* I don't see nothin' in your saddle that looks t' me like a *man*, by cripes! All I can see is a smooth-skinned, slippery thing I'd hate to name a snake after, that crawls around in the dark and lets cheap fellers take all the hard knocks. I've saw dogs sneak up behind and grab a man, but 'most always they let out a growl or two first. And even a rattler is honest enough to buzz at yuh and give yuh a chanc't. Honest to grandma, I don't hardly know *what* kinda reptyle y' are. I hate to insult *any* of 'em, by cripes, by callin' yuh after 'em. But don't, for Lordy's sake, ever call yourself a *man* ag'in!"

Big Medicine turned his head and spat disgustedly into the grass, looked back slightly, with other annihilating remarks close behind wide-apart teeth, and, instead of speaking, made an unbelievably quick motion with his hand. The blow smacked loudly upon Dunk's cheek, and so nearly sent him out of the saddle that he grabbed for the horn to save himself.

"Oh, I seen yuh keepin' yer hand next yer six-gun, all the while!" he bawled. "That's one reason I say yuh ain't no man! Yuh wouldn't dast talk up to a prairie dog if yuh wasn't all set to make a quick draw. Yuh got your face slapped onc't before by a Flyin' U man, and yuh had it coming. Now you're—gittin'—it—done—*right!*"

If you have ever seen an irate, proletarian mother cuffing her offspring over an empty woodbox, you may picture, perhaps, the present proceeding of Big Medicine. To many a man the thing would have been unfeasible, after the first blow, because of the horses. But

Big Medicine was very nearly all that he claimed to be; and one of his pet vanities was his horsemanship. He therefore kept within a fine slapping distance of Dunk, in spite of two plunging horses. The Happy Family said afterward that it was as good as a show, just to stand back and look on. Big Medicine stopped when his hand began to tingle through his glove.

"Now, you keep your hand away from that gun—that you ain't honest enough to carry where folks can see it, but 've got it cached in your pocket!" he thundered. "And go on with what you was goin' t' say. Only don't get swell-headed enough to think you're a *man*, ag'in. You ain't."

"I've got this to say!" Mere type cannot reproduce Dunk's spluttering speech. "I've sent for the county sheriff and a dozen deputies, to arrest you, and you, and *you!*" he was pointing a shaking finger at the older members of the Happy Family, whom he recognized, not gladly, but too well. "I'll have every one of you in Deer Lodge before that lying, thieving, cattle-stealing Old Man of yours can lift a finger. I'll sheep Flying U Coulee to the very doors of the White House. I'll skin the range between here and the river—and I'll have Jim Whitmore in a receiver's hands before another year." He drew a hand across his mouth, and smiled as they say Satan himself can smile upon occasion.

"You've done enough to send you all over the road; destroying property and assaulting harmless men—you wait! There are other and better ways to fight than with the fists, and I haven't forgotten any of you fellows—there are a few more rounders among you who——"

"Hey! You apologize fer that, by cripes, er I'll kill yuh the longest way I know! And that——" Big Medicine again laid violent hands upon Dunk. "And that way won't feel good, now I'm tellin' yuh. *Apologize*, er——"

"Say, all this don't do any good, Bud," Weary expostulated. "Let Dunk froth at the mouth if he wants to; what we want is to get these sheep off the

range. And," he added recklessly, "so long as the sheriff is headed for us, anyway, we may as well get busy and make it worth while. So——" He stopped, silenced by a most amazing interruption.

On the brow of the hill, when first they had sighted Dunk in the hollow, something had gone wrong with Miguel's saddle so that he had stopped behind; and, to keep him company, Andy had stopped also and waited for him. Later, when Dunk was spluttering threats, they had galloped up to the edge of the group and pulled their horses to a stand. Now Miguel rode abruptly close to Dunk, as rides one with a purpose.

He leaned and peered intently into Dunk's distorted countenance, until every man there, struck by his manner, was watching him curiously. Then he sat back in the saddle, straightened his legs in the stirrups, and laughed. And, like his smile when he would have it so, or the little twitch of shoulders by which he could so incense a man, that laugh brought a deeper flush to Dunk's face, reddened though it was by Big Medicine's vigorous slapping.

"You've got nerve," drawled the Native Son, "to let a sheriff travel toward you. I can remember when you were more timid, *amigo*." He turned his head until his eyes fell upon Andy. "Say, Andy!" he called. "Come and take a look at this hombre. You'll have to think back a few years," he assisted laconically.

In response, Andy rode up eagerly. Like the Native Son, he leaned and peered into eyes that stared back defiantly; wavered, and turned away. Andy also sat back in the saddle, then, and snorted.

"So *this* is the Dunk Whittaker that's been raising merry hell around here! And talks about sending for the sheriff, huh? I've always heard that a lot uh gall is the best disguise a man can hide under, but, by gracious, this beats the deuce!" He turned, with growing excitement in his manner, to the astounded Happy Family.

"Boys, we don't have to worry much

about *this* gazabo! We'll just freeze onto him till the sheriff heaves in sight. Gee! There'll sure be something stirring when we tell him who this Dunk person really is! And you say he was in with the Old Man once? Oh, Lord!" He looked with withering contempt at Dunk; and Dunk's glance flickered again and dropped, just as his hand dropped to the pocket of his coat.

"No, yuh don't, by cripes!" Big Medicine's hand gripped Dunk's arm on the instant. With his other he plucked the gun from Dunk's pocket, and released him as he would let go of something foul which he had been compelled to touch.

"He'll be good, or he'll lose his dinner quick," drawled the Native Son, drawing his own silver-mounted six-shooter and resting it languidly upon the saddle horn so that it pointed straight at Dunk's diaphragm. "You take Weary off somewhere and tell him what you like, Andy. I'll watch this slippery gentleman." He smiled slowly, and got an answering grin from Andy Green, who immediately rode away a few rods, with Weary and Pink close behind.

"Say, by golly, what's Dunk wanted fer?" Slim blurted inquisitively, after a short silence.

"Not for riding or driving over a bridge faster than a walk, Slim," purred the Native Son, shifting his gun a trifle as Dunk moved uneasily in the saddle. "You know the man. Look at his face—and use your imagination, if you've got any."

CHAPTER XI.

"Well, I hope this farce is about over," Dunk sneered, with as near an approach to his old, supercilious manner as he could command, when the three who had ridden apart returned presently. "Perhaps, Weary, you'll be good enough to have this fellow put up his gun, and these——" he hesitated, after a swift glance, to apply any epithet whatever to the Happy Family. "I have two witnesses here to swear that you have, without any excuse, as-

saulted and maligned and threatened me, and you may consider yourselves lucky if I do not insist——”

“Ah, cut that out!” Andy advised wearily. “I don’t know how it strikes the rest, but it sounds pretty sickening to me. Don’t overlook the fact that two of us happen to know all about you; and we know just where to send word, to dig up a lot more identification. So bluffing ain’t going to help you out a darned bit!”

“Miguel, you can go with Andy,” Weary said, with brisk decision. “You can take Dunk down to the ranch till the sheriff gets here—if it’s straight goods about Dunk sending for him. If he didn’t, we can take Dunk in to-morrow ourselves.” He turned and fixed a cold, commanding eye upon the slack-jawed herders. “Come alive, you two, and get these sheep headed outa here.”

“Say, we’ll just lock him up in the blacksmith shop, and come on back,” Andy amended the order, after his own free fashion. “He couldn’t get out in a million years; not after I’m through staking him out to the anvil with a log chain.” He smiled maliciously into Dunk’s fear-yellowed countenance, and waved him a signal to ride ahead. Which Dunk did without a word of protest, while the Happy Family looked on dazedly.

“What’s it all about, Weary?” Irish asked, when the three were gone. “What is it they’ve got on Dunk? Must be something pretty fierce, the way he wilted down into the saddle.”

“You’ll have to wait and ask the boys.” Weary rode off to hurry the herders on the far side of the band.

So the Happy Family remained unenlightened upon the subject, and for that they said hard things about Weary, and about Andy and Miguel as well. They believed that they were entitled to know, and they called it a smart-aleck trick to keep the thing so almighty secret.

There is in resentment a crisis, and when that crisis is reached, and the dam of repression gives way, the full flood does not always sweep down upon those who have provoked the disaster.

Frequently it happens that perfectly innocent victims are made to suffer. The Happy Family had been extremely forbearing, as has been pointed out before. They had frequently come to the boiling point of rage, and had cooled without committing any real act of violence. But that day had held a long series of petty annoyances; and here was a really important thing kept from them as if they were mere outsiders. When Weary was gone, Irish asked Pink. And Pink shook his head, and said he didn’t know. Irish mentally accused Pink of lying, and his temper was none the better for the rebuff, as any one can readily understand.

When the herders, therefore, rounded up the sheep and started them moving south, the Happy Family speedily rebelled against that shuffling, nibbling, desultory pace which had kept them long, weary hours in the saddle with that other band. But it was Irish who first took measures to accelerate that pace.

He got down his rope, and whacked the loop viciously across the nearest gray back. The sheep jumped, scuttled away a few paces, and returned to its nibbling progress. Irish called it names, and whacked another.

After a few minutes he grew tired of swinging his loop and seeing it have so fleeting an effect, and pulled his gun. He fired close to the heels of a yearling buck that had more than once stopped to look up at him foolishly and blat, and the buck charged ahead in a panic at the noise and the spat of the bullet behind him.

“Hit him ag’in in the same place!” yelled Big Medicine, and drew his own gun. The Happy Family, at that high tension where they were ready for anything, caught the infection, and began shooting and yelling like crazy men.

The effect was not at all what they expected. Instead of adding impetus to the band, as would have been the case if they had been driving cattle, the result was exactly the opposite. The sheep ran—but they ran to a common center. As the shooting went on, they bunched tighter and tighter, until it

seemed as though those in the middle must surely be crushed absolutely flat. From an ambling, feeding company of animals, they became a lumpy, gray blanket, with here and there a long, vacuous face showing idiotically upon the surface.

The herders grinned and drew together, as against a common enemy—or as with a new joke to be discussed among themselves. The dogs wandered helplessly about, yelped half-heartedly at the woolly mass, then sat down upon their haunches and lolled red tongues far out over their pointed little teeth, and tilted knowing heads at the Happy Family.

"Look at the derved things!" wailed Pink, riding twice around the huddle, almost ready to shed tears of pure rage and helplessness. "Git outa that! Hi! Whoop-ee!" He fired again and again, and gave the range-old cattle yell; the yell which had sent many a weary herd over many a weary mile; the yell before which had fled fat steers into the stockyards at shipping time, and up the chutes into the cars; the yell which had hoarsened many a cow-puncher's voice and left him with a mere croak to curse his fate with; a yell to bring results—but it did not start those sheep.

The Happy Family, riding furiously round and round, fired every cartridge they had upon their persons; they said every improper thing they could remember or invent; they yelled until their eyes were starting from their sockets. They glued that band of sheep so tight together that dynamite could scarcely have pried them apart.

And the herders, sitting apart with grimy hands clasped loosely over hunched-up knees, looked on, and talked together in low tones, and grinned.

Irish glanced that way, and caught them grinning; caught them pointing derisively, with heaving shoulders. He swore a great oath, and made for them, calling aloud that he would knock those grins so far in that they would presently find themselves smiling wrong side out, from the back of their heads.

Pink, overhearing him, gave a last swat at the wagging tail of a burrow-

ing buck, and wheeled to overtake Irish and have a hand in reversing the grins. Big Medicine saw them start, and came bellowing up from the far side of the huddle, like a bull challenging to combat from across a meadow. Big Medicine did not know what it was all about, but he scented battle, and that was sufficient. Cal Emmett and Weary, equally ignorant of the cause, started at a lope toward the trouble center.

It began to look as if the whole Family was about to fall upon those herders and rend them asunder with teeth and nails; so much so, that the herders jumped up and ran like scared cottontails toward the rim of Denson Coulee, a hundred yards or so to the west.

"Mamma! I wish we could make the sheep hit that gait, and keep it," exclaimed Weary, with the first laugh they had heard from him that day.

While he was still laughing, there was a shot from the ridge toward which they were running; the sharp, vicious crack of a rifle. The Happy Family heard the whistling hum of it, singing low over their heads; quite low, indeed; altogether too low to be funny. And they had squandered all their ammunition on the prairie sod, to hurry a band of sheep that flatly refused to hurry anywhere—except under one another's odorous, perspiring bodies!

From the edge of the coulee the rifle spoke again. A tiny geyser of dust, spurting up from the ground ten feet to one side of Cal Emmett, showed them all where the bullet struck.

"Git outa range, everybody!" yelled Weary, and set the example by tilting his rowels against Glory's smooth hide, and heading eastward. "I like to be accommodating, all right, but I draw the line on standing around for a target while my neighbors practice shooting at me."

The Happy Family, having no other recourse, therefore retreated in haste toward the eastern sky line. And while they rode, bullets followed them, overtook them as the shooter raised his sights for the increasing distance, and whined harmlessly over their heads. All, save one.

CHAPTER XII.

Big Medicine, Irish, and Pink, racing almost abreast, heard the scream behind them, and pulled up their horses with short, stiff-legged plunges. A brown horse overtook them; a brown horse, with Happy Jack clinging with both hands to the saddle horn, and his body swaying far over to one side. Even as he went hurtling past them, his hold grew slack, and he slumped, headforemost, to the ground. The brown horse gave a startled leap away from him, and went on, with empty stirrups flapping.

They sprang down and lifted him to a less awkward position, and Big Medicine pillowed the sweat-dampened, carrot head in the hollow of his arm. Those who had been in the lead looked back, startled when the brown horse tore past them with that empty saddle, saw what had happened, wheeled, and galloped back. They dismounted and stood silently grouped about poor, ungainly Happy Jack, lying there limp and motionless in Big Medicine's arms. Not one of them remembered then that there was a man with a rifle not more than two hundred yards away; or, if they did, they quite forgot that the rifle might be dangerous to themselves. They were thinking of Happy Jack.

Happy Jack, butt of all their jokes and gibes; Happy, the croaker, the lugubrious forecaster of trouble; Happy Jack, the ugliest, the most complaining, the ungainliest, the stupidest, the softest-hearted man of them all. He had "betched" there would be some one killed, over these Dot sheep; he had predicted trouble of every conceivable kind; and they had laughed at him, swore at him, lied to him, "joshed" him unmercifully, and kept him in a state of chronic indignation, never dreaming that the memory of it would choke them and strike them dumb with that horrible, dull weight in their chests with which men suffer when a woman would find the relief of weeping.

"Where's he hurt?" asked Weary, in that repressed tone which only tragedy can bring into a man's voice, and knelt beside Big Medicine.

"I dunno—through the lungs, I guess; my sleeve's gitting soppy right under his shoulder." Big Medicine did not bellow; his voice was as quiet as Weary's.

Weary looked up briefly at the circle of staring faces. "Pink, you pile onto Glory and go wire for a doctor. Try Havre first; you may get one up on the nine o'clock train. If you can't, get one down on the 'leven-twenty, from Great Falls. Or there's Benton—anyway, *get* one. If you could catch MacPherson, do it. Try him first, and never mind a Havre doctor, unless you can't get MacPherson. I'd rather wait a couple of hours longer for him. I'll have a rig—no, you better get a team from Jim. They'll be fresh, and you can put 'em through. If you kill 'em," he added grimly, "we can pay for 'em." He had his jackknife out, and was already slashing carefully the shirt of Happy Jack, that he might inspect the wound.

Pink gave a last, wistful glance at Happy Jack's face, which looked unfamiliar with all the color and all the expression wiped out of it like that, saw the blankness change to something like surprise as his eyes opened and stared around at them, and turned away. "Come and help me change saddles, Cal," he said shortly, having no words for his relief that Happy was conscious. "I can't ride Weary's saddle—the stirrups are too darned long." Even with the delay, he was mounted on Glory and galloping toward Flying U Coulee before Weary was through uncovering the wound. And that does not mean that Weary was slow.

The rifle cracked again, and a bullet plucked into the sod twenty feet beyond the circle of men and horses. But no one looked up or gave any other sign of realization that they were still the target; they were staring with that frowning, painfully intent look men have at such moments, at a purplish hole, not much bigger than if punched by a lead pencil, just under the point of Happy Jack's shoulder blade; and at the blood oozing sluggishly from it in a tiny stream across the white flesh, and dripping upon Big Medicine's arm.

"Hadn't we better get a rig to take him home with?" Irish suggested.

Weary, exploring farther, had just disclosed a ragged wound under the arm where the bullet had passed out, and made no immediate reply.

"Well, he ain't got it stuck inside of 'im, anyway," Big Medicine commented relievedly. "Don't look to me like it's so awful bad—went through kinda anglin', and maybe missed his lungs. I've saw men shot up before——"

"Aw—I betche you'd—*think* it was bad—if you had it," murmured Happy Jack peevishly, lifting his eyelids heavily again for a resentful glance when they moved him a little. But even as Big Medicine grinned down at him, he went off again into mental darkness, and the grin faded into solicitude.

"You'd kick, by golly, if you was goin' to be hung," Slim bantered tritely and belatedly, and gulped remorsefully when he saw that he was "joshing" an unconscious man.

"We better get him home. Irish, you ——" Weary looked up, and discovered that Irish and Jack Bates were already headed for home and a conveyance. He gave a sigh of approval, and turned his attention toward wiping the sweat and grime from Happy's face with his handkerchief.

"Somebody else is goin' to git hit, by golly, if we stay here," Slim blurted suddenly, when another bullet dug up the dirt in that vicinity. "That gold-darned fool'll keep on till he kills somebody. I wisht I had m' thirty-thirty here—I'd make him wisht his mother was a man, by golly!"

Big Medicine looked toward the coulee rim. "I ain't got a shell left," he growled regretfully. "I wisht we'd thought to tell the boys to bring them rifles. Say, Slim, you crawl onto your hoss and go git 'em. It won't take more'n a minute. There'll likely be some shells in the magazines."

"Go on, Slim," urged Weary grimly. "We've got to do *something*. We can't let them do a thing like this"—he glanced down at Happy Jack—"and get away with it."

"I got half a box uh shells for my

thirty-thirty. I'll bring that." Slim turned to go, stopped short, and stared at the coulee rim. "By golly, they're comin' over here!" he exclaimed.

Big Medicine glanced up, took off his hat, crumpled it for a pillow, and eased Happy Jack down upon it. He got up stiffly, wiped his fingers mechanically upon his trousers legs, broke his gun open just to make sure that it was indeed empty, put it back, and picked up a handful of rocks.

"Let 'em come," he said viciously. "I c'n kill every blame' one with m' bare hands!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"Say, ain't that Andy and Mig following along behind?" Cal asked, after a minute of watching the approach. "Sure it is. Now, what——"

"They're *drivin'* 'em, by cripes!" Big Medicine, under the stress of the moment, returned to his usual bellowing tone. "Who's that tall, lanky feller in the lead? I don't call to mind ever seein' *him* before. Them four herders I'd know a mile off."

"That?" Weary shaded his eyes with his hat brim against the slant rays of the westerling sun. "That's Oleson, Dunk's partner."

"His mother'd be a-weepin'," Big Medicine observed bodefully, "if she knowed what was due to happen to her son right away quick. Must be him that done the shootin'."

They came on steadily, the four herders and Oleson walking reluctantly ahead, with Andy Green and the Native Son riding relentlessly in the rear, their guns held unwaveringly in a line with the backs of their captives. Andy was carrying a rifle, evidently taken from one of the men; Oleson they judged for the guilty one. Half the distance they covered, when Andy was seen to turn his head and speak briefly with the Native Son; afterward he lunged past the captives and galloped up to the waiting group. His quick eyes sought first the face of Happy Jack in anxious questioning, then, miserably, he searched the faces of his friends.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed mechanically, dismounted, and bent over the figure on the ground. For a long minute he knelt there; he laid his ear close to Happy Jack's mouth, took off his glove and laid his hand over Happy's heart; reached up, twitched off his neckerchief, shook out the creases, and spread it reverently over Happy Jack's face. He stood up then and spoke slowly, his eyes fixed upon the stumbling approach of the captives.

"Pink told us Happy had been shot. We met Pink coming up the hill. So we rode around and come up behind 'em. It was a cinch. And—say, boys: We've got to think first of the outfit. You know that. We've got the Dots in a pocket. They've got to eat outa our hands, now. So don't think about—our own feelings, or about—" he stopped abruptly, and let a downward glance finish the sentence. "We've got to keep our own hands clean, and—now, *don't* let your fingers get the itch, Bud!" This, because of certain manifestations of a murderous intent on the part of Big Medicine.

"Oh, it's all right to talk, if yuh feel like talking," Big Medicine retorted savagely. "I don't." He made a catlike spring at the foremost man, who happened to be Oleson, got a merciless grip with his fingers on his throat, and snarled like a predatory animal over its kill. But Andy, with Weary to help, pulled him off.

"I didn't mean to—to kill anybody," gasped Oleson, pasty white. "I heard a lot of shooting, and so I ran up the hill—and the herders came running toward me, and I thought—I was defending my property and men. I had a right to defend—"

"Defend hell!" Big Medicine writhed in the restraining grasp of those who held him. "Look at that there! As good-hearted a boy as ever turned a cow! Never harmed a soul in 'is life. Is all your blattin' sheep, an' all your piffin' herders, worth that boy's life? Yuh shot 'im down like a dog—Lemme go, boys!" His voice was husky. "Lemme tromp the life outa him."

"I thought you were killing my men, or I never—I never meant to—to—kill ——" Oleson, shaking till he could scarcely stand, broke down and wept; wept pitifully, hysterically, as men of a certain fiber will weep when black tragedy confronts them unaware. He cowered miserably before the Happy Family, his face hidden behind his two hands.

"Boys, I want to say a word or two. Come over here." Andy's voice, quiet as ever, contrasted strangely with the man's sobbing. He led them back a few paces—Weary, Cal, Big Medicine, and Slim, and spoke hurriedly.

The Native Son eyed them sidelong from his horse, but he was careful to keep Oleson covered with his gun—and the herders, too, for all they were unarmed. Once or twice he glanced at that long, ungainly figure in the grass, with the handkerchief of Andy Green hiding the face except where a corner, fluttering in the faint breeze which came creeping out of the west, lifted now and then and gave a glimpse of sun-browned throat and quiet chin and mouth.

"Quit that blubbering, Oleson, and listen here." Andy's voice broke relentlessly upon the other's woe. "All these boys want to hang yuh without any red tape; far as I'm concerned, I'm dead willing. But we're going to give yuh a chance. Your partner, as we told yuh coming over, we've got the dead immortal cinch on, right now. And—well, you can see what *you're* up against. But we'll give yuh a chance. Have you got any family?"

Oleson, trying to pull himself together, shook his head.

"Well, then, you get rid of them sheep. Sell 'em, ship 'em outa here—we don't give a darn what yuh do, only so yuh get 'em off the range."

"Y-es, I'll do that." Oleson's consent was reluctant, but it was fairly prompt. "I'll get rid of the sheep," he said, as if he was minded to clinch the promise. "I'll do it at once."

"That's nice." Andy spoke with grim irony. "And you'll get rid of the ranch,

too. You'll sell it to the Flying U—cheap."

"But my partner—Whittaker might object——"

"Look here, old-timer. You'll fix that part up; you'll find a way of fixing it. Look there—at what you're up against." He waited, with pointing finger, for one terrible minute. "Will you sell to the Flying U?"

"Y-es!" The word was really a gulp. He tried to avoid looking where Andy pointed; failed, and shuddered at what he saw.

"I thought you would. We'll get that in writing. And we're going to wait just exactly forty-eight hours before we make a move. It'll take some fine work, but we'll do it. Our boss, here, will fix up the business end with you. He'll go with yuh right now, and stay with yuh till you make good. And the first crooked move you make——" Andy, in unconscious imitation of the Native Son, shrugged a shoulder expressively.

"Cal, you come with me. The rest of you fellows know about what to do—Andy, I guess you'll have to ride point till I get back." Weary hesitated, looked from Happy Jack to Oleson and the herders, and back to the sober faces of his fellows. "Do what you can for him, boys—and I wish one of you would ride over, after Pink gets back, and—let me know how things stack up, will you?"

Incredible as was the situation on the face of it, nevertheless, it was extremely matter of fact in the handling, which is the way, sometimes, with incredible situations; as if, since we know instinctively that we cannot rise unprepared to the bigness of its possibilities, we keep our feet planted steadfastly on the ground and refuse to rise at all. And afterward, perhaps, we look back and wonder how it all came about.

At the last moment, Weary turned back and exchanged guns with Andy Green, because his own was empty, and he realized the possible need of one—or, at least, the need of having the sheepmen perfectly aware that he had one ready for use. The Native Son,

without a word of comment, handed his own silver-trimmed weapon over to Cal, and rolled a cigarette deftly with one hand while he watched them ride away.

"Does this strike anybody else as being pretty raw?" he inquired calmly, dismounting among them. "I'd do a good deal for the outfit myself; but letting that man get off—— Say, you fellows up this way don't think killing a man amounts to much, do you?" He looked from one to the other with a queer, contemptuous hostility in his eyes.

Andy Green took a forward step and laid a hand familiarly on his rigid shoulder. "Quit it, Mig! We *would* do a lot for the outfit; that's the God's truth. And I played the game right up to the hilt, I admit. But nobody's killed. I told Happy to play dead. By gracious, I caught him just in the nick uh time; he'd been setting up, in another minute." To prove it, he bent and twitched the handkerchief from the face of Happy Jack, and Happy opened his eyes and made shift to growl:

"Yuh purty near—smothered me t' death, darn yuh!"

"*Dios!*" breathed the Native Son, for once since they knew him jolted out of his eternal calm. "Oh, but I'm glad!"

"I guess the rest of us ain't," insinuated Andy softly, and lifted his hat to wipe the sweat off his forehead. "I will say that——" After all, he did not. Instead, he knelt beside Happy Jack and painstakingly adjusted the crumpled hat a hair's breadth.

"How do yuh feel, old-timer?" he asked, with a very thin disguise of cheerfulness laid upon the anxiety of his tone.

"Well, I could feel a lot—better, without hurtin' nothin'," Happy Jack responded somberly. "I hope you fellows—feel better, now. Yuh got 'em—tryin' to murder—the hull outfit; jes' like I—told yuh they would——" Gun-shot wounds, contrary to the tales of certain sentimentalists, do not appreciably sweeten, or even change, a man's disposition. Happy Jack with a bullet hole through one side of him was still Happy Jack.

"Aw, quit your beefin'," Big Medicine advised gruffly. "A feller with a hole in his lung yuh could throw a cat through sideways ain't got no business statin' his views on *nothin'*, by cripes!"

"Aw, g'wan! I thought you said—it didn't amount t' nothin'," Happy reminded him, anxiety stealing into his face.

"Well, it don't. May lay yuh up a day or two; woukd'n't be su'prised if yuh had to stay on the bed ground two or three meals. But look at Slim, here. Shot through the leg—shattered a bone, by cripes!—las' night, only; and here he's makin' a hand and ridin' and cuss-in' same as any of us t'-day. We ain't goin' to let yuh grouch around, that's all. We claim we got a vacation comin' to us; you're shot up now, and that's fun enough for one man, without throwin' it into the whole bunch. Why, a little nick like that ain't nothin'; nothin' a-tall. Why, I've been shot right through *here*, by cripes"—Big Medicine laid an impressive finger tip on the top button of his trousers—"and it come out back here"—he whirled and showed his thumb against the small of his back—"and I never laid off but that day and part uh the next. I was sore," he admitted, goggling Happy Jack earnestly, "but I kep' a-goin'. It was right in fall round-up, an' I had to. A man can't lay down an' cry, by cripes, jes' because he got pinked a little——"

"Aw, that's jest because—it ain't you. I betche you'd lay 'em down—jest like other folks, if yuh got shot—through the lungs. That ain't no—joke, lemme tell yuh!" Happy Jack was beginning to show considerable spirit, for a wounded man, so much spirit that Andy Green, who had seen men stricken down with various ills, saw fever signs in the countenance and in the voice of Happy, and led Big Medicine somewhat peremptorily out of earshot.

"Ain't you got any sense?" he inquired, with fine candor. "What do you want to throw it into him like that, for? You may not think so, but he's pretty bad off—if you ask *me*."

Big Medicine's pale eyes turned commiseratingly toward Happy Jack. "I

know he is; I ain't no fool. I was jest tryin' to cheer 'im up a little. He was beginnin' to look like he was gittin' scared about it; I reckon maybe I made a break, sayin' what I did about it, so I jest wanted to take the cuss off. Honest to gran'ma——"

"If you know anything at all about such things, you must know what fever means in such a case. And recollect, it's going to be quite a while before a doctor can get here."

"Oh, I'll be careful. Maybe I did throw it purty strong; I won't no more." Big Medicine's meekness was not the least amazing incident of the day. He was a big-hearted soul under his bellow and bluff, and his sympathy for Happy Jack struck deep. He went back on his toes, and he stood so that his sturdy body shaded Happy Jack's face from the sun, and he did not open his mouth for another word until Irish and Jack Bates came rattling up with the spring wagon hurriedly transformed with mattress, pillows, and blankets into an ambulance.

They had been thoughtful to a degree. They brought with them a jug of water and a tin cup, and a clean dish towel of Patsy's, and they gave Happy Jack a long, cooling drink, and bathed his face and his wound before they lifted him into the wagon. And of all the hands that ministered to his needs, the hands of Big Medicine were the most eager and the gentlest, and his voice was the most vibrant with sympathy; which is saying a good deal.

CHAPTER XIV.

Slim may not have been more curious than his fellows, but he was perhaps more single-hearted in his loyalty to the outfit. To him the shooting of Happy Jack, once he felt assured that the wound was not necessarily fatal, became of secondary importance. It was all in behalf of the Flying U; and if the bullet which laid Happy Jack upon the ground was also the means of driving the hated Dots from that neighborhood, he felt, in his slow, phlegmatic way,

that it wasn't such a catastrophe as some of the others seemed to feel. Of course, he wouldn't want Happy to die; but he didn't believe, after all, that Happy was going to do anything like that. Old Patsy knew a lot about sickness and hurts; who can cook for a cattle outfit, for twenty years and more, and not know a good deal of hurts? Old Patsy had looked Happy over carefully, and had given a grin and a snort.

"Py cosh, dot vos lucky for you, al-reatty," he had pronounced. "So you don't git plood poisonings, mit fever, you be all right pretty soon. You go to shleep, yet. I fix you oop till der dochtor he cooms. I seen fellers shot plumb through der middle off dem, und git vell. You ain't shot so bad. You go to shleep."

So, his immediate fears relieved, Slim's slow mind swung surely back to the Dots, and to Oleson, whom Weary was even now assisting to keep his promise—Slim grinned widely to himself when he thought of the abject fear which Oleson had displayed because of the murder he thought he had done, while Happy Jack obediently "played dead"—and to Dunk, whom Slim had hated most abominably of old; Dunk, a criminal found out; Dunk, a prisoner right there on the very ranch he had thought to despoil; Dunk, at that very moment locked in the blacksmith shop. Perhaps it was not curiosity alone which sent him down there; perhaps it was merely a desire to look upon Dunk humbled—he who had trodden so arrogantly upon the necks of those below him; so arrogantly that even Slim, the slow-witted one, had many a time trembled with anger at his tone.

Slim walked slowly, as was his wont; with deadly directness, as was his nature. The blacksmith shop was silent, closed—as grimly noncommittal as a vault. You might guess whatever you pleased about its inmate; it was like trying to imagine the emotions pictured upon the face behind a smooth, black mask. Slim stopped before the closed door and listened. The rusty, iron hasp attracted his slow gaze, at first puzzling him a little, making him vaguely aware

that something about it did not quite harmonize with his mental attitude toward it. It took him a full minute to realize that he had expected to find the door locked, and that the hasp hung downward uselessly, just as it hung every day in the year.

He remembered then that Andy had spoken of chaining Dunk to the anvil. That would make it absolutely unnecessary to lock the door, of course. Slim seized the hanging strip of iron, gave it a jerk, and bathed all the dingy interior with a soft, sunset glow. Cobwebs quivered at the inrush of the breeze, and glistened like threads of fine gold. The forge remained a dark blot in the corner. A new chisel, lying upon the earthen floor, became a bar of yellow light.

Slim's eyes went to the anvil and clung there in a widening stare. His hands, white and soft when his gloves were off, drew up convulsively into fighting fists, and, as he stood looking, the cords swelled and stood out upon his thick neck. For years he had hated Dunk Whittaker—

The Happy Family, with rare good sense, had not hesitated to turn the White House into an impromptu hospital. They knew that, if the Little Doctor and Chip and the Old Man had been at home, Happy Jack would have been taken unquestioningly into the guest chamber—which was a square, three-windowed room off the big living room. More than one of them had occupied it upon occasion. They took Happy Jack up there and put him to bed quite as a matter of course, and when he was asleep they lingered upon the wide front porch; the hammock of the Little Doctor squeaked under the weight of Andy Green, and the wide-armed chairs received the weary forms of divers young cow-punchers who did not give a thought to the intrusion, but were thankful for the comfort. Andy was swinging luxuriously and drawing the last few puffs from a cigarette when Slim, purple, and puffing audibly, appeared portentously before him.

"I thought you said you was goin' to

lock Dunk up in the blacksmith shop?" he launched accusingly at Andy.

"We did," averred that young man, pushing his toe against the railing to accelerate the voluptuous motion of the hammock.

"He ain't there. He's broke loose. The chain—by golly, yuh went an' used that chain that was broke, an' jest barely hangin' together. His horse ain't anywheres around, either. You fellers make me sick! Lollin' around here an' not paying no attention, by golly—he's liable to be ten mile from here by this time." When Slim stopped, his jaw quivered like a dish of disturbed jelly. And I only wish I could give you his tone; choppy, every sentence an accusation that should have made those fellows wince.

Irish, Big Medicine, and Jack Bates had sprung guiltily to their feet and started down the steps. The drawling voice of the Native Son stopped them, ten feet from the porch.

"Twelve, or fifteen, I should make it. That horse of his looked to me like a drifter."

"Well—are yuh goin' t' set there on your haunches an' let him go?" Slim, by the look of him, was ripe for murder.

"You want to look out; you'll get apoplexy, sure," Andy soothed, giving himself another luxurious push, and pulling the last little whiff from his cigarette before he threw away the stub. "Fat men can't afford to get as excited as skinny ones can."

"Aw, say! Where did yuh put him, Andy?" asked Big Medicine, his first flurry subsiding before the absolute calm of those two on the porch.

"In the blacksmith shop," said Andy, with a slurring accent on the first word that made the whole sentence perfectly maddening. "Ah, come on back here and sit down. I guess we better tell 'em the how of it. Huh, Mig?"

Miguel cast a slow, humorous glance over the four. "Ye-es—they'll have us treed in about two minutes, if we don't," he assented. "Go ahead."

"Well," Andy lifted his head and shoulders that he might readjust a pil-

low to his liking. "We wanted him to make a get-away. Fact is, if he hadn't, we'd have been—strictly—up against it. Right! If he hadn't—how about it, Mig? I guess we'd have taken to the Little Rockies ourselves."

"You've got a sweet little voice," Irish cut in savagely, "but we're tired. We'd rather hear yuh say something!"

"Oh—all right. Well, Mig and I just ribbed up a josh on Dunk. I'd read somewhere about the same kinda deal, so it ain't original. I don't lay any claim to the idea at all. We just borrowed it. You see, it's like this: We figured that a man as mean as this Dunk person most likely had stepped over the line somewhere. So we just took a gambling chance, and let him do the rest. You see, *we* never saw him before in our lives. All that identification stunt of ours was just a bluff. But the minute I shoved my chips to the center, I knew we had him dead to rights. You were there. You saw him wilt. By gracious——"

"Yuh don't know anything against him?" gasped Irish.

"Not a darned thing—any more than what you all know," testified Andy complacently.

It took a minute or two for that to sink in.

"We did chain him to the anvil," Andy went on. "On the way down, we talked about being in a hurry to get back to you fellows, and I told Mig—so Dunk could hear—that we wouldn't bother with the horse. We tied him to the corral. And I hunted around for that bum chain, and then we made out we couldn't find the padlock for the door, so we decided, right out loud, that he'd be dead safe for an hour or two, till the bunch of us got back. Not knowing a darn thing about him, except what you boys have told us, we'd have been in bad if he *hadn't* taken a sneak. Fact is, we were kinda worried for fear he wouldn't have nerve enough to try it. We waited, up on the hill, till we saw him sneak down to the corral and jump on his horse and take off down the coulee like a scared coyote. It was," quoth the young man, unmistakably pleased

with himself, "pretty smooth work, if you ask *me*."

"I'd hate to ride as fast and far to-night as that hombre will," supplemented Miguel, with his brief smile, that was just a flash of white, even teeth and a momentary lightening of his languorous eyes.

Slim stood for five minutes a stolid, stocky figure in the midst of a storm of congratulatory comment. They forgot all about Happy Jack, asleep inside the house, and so their voices were not hushed. Indeed, Big Medicine's bull-like voice boomed, full-throated, across the coulee, and was flung back mockingly by the barren hills. Slim did not hear a word they were saying; he was thinking it over, with that complete mental concentration which is the chief recompense of a slow-working mind. He was methodically thinking it all out—and, eventually, he saw the joke.

"Well, by golly!" he bawled suddenly, and brought his palm down with a terrific smack upon his sore leg—where-at his fellows laughed uproariously.

"We told you not to try to see through any more jokes till your leg gets well, Slim," Andy reminded condescendingly.

"Say, by golly, that's a good one on Dunk, ain't it? Chasin' himself clean outa the country, by golly—scared plumb to death—and you fellers was only jest *makin' b'lieve* yuh knowed him! By golly, that sure is a good one, all right!"

"You've got it; give you time enough and you could see through a barbed-wire fence," patronized Andy, from the hammock. "Yes, while you speak of it, I think, myself, it ain't so bad."

"Aw-w shut up, out there, an' let a feller sleep!" came a querulous voice from within. "I'd ruther bed down with a corral full uh calves at weanin' time than be anywheres within ten mile uh you darned, mouthy—" The rest was indistinguishable, but it did not matter. The Happy Family, save Slim, who stayed to look after the patient, tiptoed penitently off the porch and took themselves and their enthusiasm down to the bunk house.

CHAPTER XV.

Pink rolled over in his bed so that he might look—however sleepily—upon his fellows, dressing more or less quietly in the cool dawn hour.

"Say, I got a letter for you, Weary," he yawned, stretching both arms above his head. "I opened it and read it; it was from Chip, so——"

"What did he have to say?"

"Old Man any better?"

"How they comin', back there?"

Several voices speaking at once necessitated a delayed reply.

"They'll be here to-day or to-morrow," Pink replied, without any circumlocution whatever, while he fumbled in his coat pocket for the letter. "He says the Old Man wants to come, and the doctors think he might as well tackle it as stay there fussing over it. They're coming in a special car, and we've got to rig up an outfit to meet him. The Little Doctor tells just how she wants things fixed. I thought maybe it was important—it come special delivery," Pink added naively, "so I just played it was mine."

"That's all right, Cadwolloper," Weary assured him, while he read hastily the letter. "Well, we'll fix up the spring wagon and take it in right away; somebody's got to go back, anyway, with MacPherson. Hello, Cal; how's Happy?"

"All right," answered Cal, who had watched over him during the latter part of the night, and came in at that moment after some one to take his place in the sick room. "Waked up on the fight because I just happened to be setting with my eyes shut. I wasn't asleep, but he said I was; claimed I snored so loud I kept him awake all night. Gee whiz! I'd ruther nurse a she-bear with the mumps!"

"Old Man's coming home, Cal," Pink announced, with more joy in his tone and his face than had appeared in either for many a weary day.

Whereupon Cal gave an exultant whoop. "Go tell that to Happy," he shouted. "Maybe he'll forget a grouch or two. Say, luck seems to be kinda

casting loving glances our way again—what?”

“By golly, seems to me Pink oughta told us when he come in las’ night,” grumbled Slim, when he could make himself heard.

“You were all dead to the world,” Pink defended, “and I wanted to be. Two o’clock in the morning is a mighty poor time for elegant conversation, if you want my opinion.”

“And the main point is, *you* knew all about it, and you didn’t give a darn whether we did or not,” Irish said bluntly. “And Weary sneaked in, too, and never let a yip outa him about things over in Denson Coulee.”

“What was the use?” asked Weary blandly. “I got an option outa Oleson for the ranch and outfit, and all his sheep, at a mighty good figure—for the Flying U. The Old Man can do what he likes about it; but ten to one he’ll buy him out. That is, Oleson’s share, which was two-thirds. I kinda counted on Dunk letting go easy. And,” he

added, reaching for his hat, “once I got the papers for it, there wasn’t anything to hang around for, was there? Especially,” he said, with his old, sunny smile, “when we weren’t urged a whole lot to stay.”

Remained, therefore, little save the actual arrival of the Old Man—a pitifully weak old man, bandaged and odorous with antiseptics, and quite pathetically glad to be back—and his recovery, which was rapid, and the recovery of Happy Jack, more rapid still.

For a brief space, the Flying U outfit owned the Dots; very brief it was; not a day longer than it took Chip to find a buyer, at a figure considerably above that named in the option, by the way.

So, after a season of worry and trouble and impending tragedy such as no man may face unflinchingly, life dropped back to its usual level, and the trail of the Flying U outfit once more led through pleasant places.

In a fortnight you will get another story of the Flying U Ranch—a short one, the second in the series. It will appear in the first December POPULAR, on sale November 7th.



THE COLLEGE SPIRIT

THE prosperous-looking citizen came swinging down the street, his face radiant with satisfaction, his chest swelled up with the fresh morning air. He was happily disposed toward the world and all mankind. At the corner he saw a miserable object which had once been a real man. The poor fellow, clad in rags, was shivering, and hunger had emaciated his form and put dark valleys in his cheeks.

“My good friend,” said the prosperous one, “apparently you have not been as fortunate as I have. I feel the impulse to help you.”

He took the tramp to a clothing store, and fitted him out in new toggery from head to foot. When they emerged from that establishment, the tramp looked like the reincarnation of Beau Brummel with bells on. The next stop was at a restaurant, where the starving man got away with about eight dollars’ worth of food. His eyes were soft with the light of gratitude, and he dearly loved his rescuer.

“Now,” said the rich man, “I am going to the Yale-Princeton football game. I am a Yale man, and I know Yale will win.”

“Quit your kidding!” objected the tramp hotly. “Princeton’s going to win.”

They argued it for half an hour, and at the end of that time the tramp, fully invigorated by his meal, caught the rich man by the collar, blacked both his eyes, wiped up the pavement with him, and then threw him into the gutter.

All of which shows that college spirit is still alive in the land.

The Half Back

By Berton Braley

WHEN the stands are black with people,
and they yell, yell, yell!

When the whistle shrills the signal for the
start,

Then the spirit sort of grips me in a potent
spell

And the blood goes dancing swiftly
through my heart!

And the rooters are forgotten with their
flags and all,

And the joy of battle pulses through my
frame,

And there's nothing worth the having but
that pigskin ball

And there isn't any glory but the game!

Mow 'em down,

Throw 'em down,

Keep 'em on the go!

Get some ginger in you there, you're too
slow!

Worry 'em,

Hurry 'em,

Never twice the same!

Keep your wits a-workin' hard, and—

Play the game!

Oh, it's good to hear the signal and with
courage steeled

To go plunging where the linemen make
a hole,

And it's bully to go flashing through a
broken field

As you dodge and twist and scurry to-
ward the goal;

There's the thump of men colliding, there's
the thud of feet,

There's the play that starts as sudden as
a flame,

There's the grit that knows no quitting and
that won't be beat,

And they all are part and parcel of the
game!

Rumple 'em,

Crumple 'em,

Smash their little play!

Jump 'em fair, but jump 'em hard—that's
the way!

Stop 'em quick,

Flop 'em quick,

Hold 'em till they're tame!

Keep forever on the jump, and—

Play the game!

Is there anything that fills you with a zest
more keen

Than to spill the interference in a pile,

Or to slam the runner earthward with a
tackle clean,

Or to gather in a punt in proper style?

It's the game of Anglo-Saxons, it's the hard
old stuff,

It's the horror of the timid and the tame,

And it calls for men of daring and of fiber
tough

Who are worthy of a chance to play the
game.

Break 'em up,

Shake 'em up,

Fool 'em with a trick!

Forward pass and double pass—plunge or
kick.

Razzle 'em,

Dazzle 'em,

Never twice the same!

Keep your eyes upon the ball, and—

Play the game!

The Further Chronicles of Norroy, Diplomatic Agent

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "Snobs," "Yorke Norroy, Diplomatic Agent," Etc.

Being the record of divers adventures that befell Yorke Norroy, secret agent of the department of state, in the year 1905, while employed on his strangest mission. Rearranged from certain private records and from the testimony of many concerned.

(A Novelette)

PROLOGUE.

YARDLY STRONG, captain in his imperial Chinese majesty's cavalry, unstrapped his cartridge belt, swung his holsters to the table, and sank into his chair, sighing wearily. It had been an arduous day of service, and not one to his liking. Catching rats in a trap hardly appealed to him as a manly sport, and his service of the day approximated that. He knew, of course, that the end in view was very wise. The empire had determined to stamp out the opium curse, and no doubt her drastic method was the best if effectual service was to be done; but he was sick of the slaughter of defenseless men.

He had dismissed his servants to their beds, and was alone in the great yamen that had formerly been occupied by Hung-Tshi-Ling, one of the masters of the Chik-Ling opium factory. Hung had been beheaded that day, his wives and children sold into slavery. The place had been effectually denuded of most of its costly furnishings by the mob that poured in whenever the soldiers had made an arrest. A few tattered hangings, a broken dragon lamp,

an American bed, some pottery of the Ming dynasty, a Japanese landscape or two; save for these and the few articles of his kit ranged about on small, inlaid tables, there was little else in the state bedroom that had served for Hung's slumbers.

Strong jacked off his boots, stripped away his golden-colored tunic, and blew out the candles. It had been several days since he had slept comfortably in pajamas; one never knew just what form the rioting would take, and it was well to be prepared. Outside, in the public square, his soldiers drowsed on their arms, the sentinels at stated intervals droning out some gutturals that stood for: "All's well."

"Seven Precious Dragons," to give the town its literally translated name, was the seat of the opium monopoly. From India, Persia, Turkey, from all the provinces of the great Manchu empire itself, from all places, in fact, where poppy fields were a source of revenue, such gum opium as was intended for the use of the smoker was shipped to Seven Precious Dragons where stood the two great factories that possessed the secret of preparing the poppy for the pipe. It was a secret

process, one that had been discovered hardly a hundred years ago by the first Hung-Tshi-Ling, a great chemist—probably the greatest of his time. In the youth of the first Hung, opium had been rolled into pellets and eaten, and the deleterious effects upon the system had been so great as to compel Hung himself—who was addicted to the habit—to cease the use of the drug. It was then that he made it the subject of analytical research; it was he who had discovered the remarkable effect heat had upon it. In the process that he invented, most of the nineteen alkaloids that make up the ordinary gum opium were banished; and, by the invention of the complicated opium pipe, the more obvious physical ill effects were somewhat abated.

Had it not been for Hung-Tshi-Ling, the First, there would have been no opium menace to-day. The secret of preparing Shandoo, as the smoking opium was called, rested entirely with him and his descendants. The two factories in Seven Precious Dragons, a little hill town in Shantung Province, were owned and controlled by the descendants of his two sons.

Both factories had gone up in smoke this very day; and every descendant of Hung-Tshi-Ling had bowed his head under the sword of the executioner. It had been Yardly Strong's task to round up the opium makers. Acting on the advice of the government spies, he had arrested not only all of the Hungs, but the mere employees of the factories as well. He relinquished his charges at Execution Gate, where twenty men, wielding great, sharp swords, had beheaded them in batches.

He turned over on Hung's bed, pressing his hands to his eyes, trying to keep out the bloody sight. He was a soldier; a man accustomed to death; but wholesale butchery was a little out of his line. He tried to see the wisdom of his superiors in office; the bland viceroy, a cultivated gentleman, a graduate of an English university; the affable prince, a Harvard and St. Cyr man; the mustachioed Manchu general, one of the White Banner, who had at-

tended the Ecole St. Louis, and had a year at West Point. All had deprecated the necessity, but not one had denied it *was* a necessity.

"When we have burned the factories and executed all the workers, the smoking of opium will be dead," Prince Shen, leader of the reform party and president of the Anti-opium League had said. "No one except the descendants of Hung know how to prepare the Shandoo. Chemists have worked on it since, here and all over the world, but no one has discovered the secret. Hung-Tshi-Ling, the First, was a genius. Had he not been a user of the drug himself, he might have been of great benefit to the world. As it was, he was its greatest curse. 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children,' says your own Book of Faith. Think; for every man we must execute in Seven Precious Dragons, there are a thousand victims of the first Hung's deadly discovery. It is fate, Captain Strong."

And so the secret of Shandoo was dead; dead out there in Execution Yard, where heads lay like bowling balls carelessly thrown. Dead, yes; dead as the hearts of the wives and the little children gone into the slave dealers' yamens, to be bargained for because of their beauty, their strength, or their cleverness. The house of Hung-Tshi-Ling, the house that had furnished great chemists, brilliant scholars, noted soldiers—one of the great Red Girdle families—was done; sold into slavery.

Yardly Strong was young, and he had suffered unjustly in his own country. It was but natural that his sympathies should be extended to the losing side. Of opium he knew little—as little as does the average man. As far as he could apprehend, the danger was not to the person, but to the state; it made people lazy, killed their ambition. But suppose they *wanted* to be lazy; suppose they were *content* without ambition? Was that any business of the state's?

He groaned as he thought of the bright-eyed, fair-skinned young Chinese, one of the last batch he had es-

corted to Execution Gate; a Harvard man, dressed in Bond Street clothes, and wearing a fraternity pin pinned to his waistcoat. He had been one of the Hungs; a submanager in the canning department, he told Strong; saw to it that the cans of opium were air-tight. He had chatted with his captor all the way to the gate.

"I specialized in pneumatics," he had said. "It was no easy thing sealing those cans; opium swells and falls with every change of temperature; sometimes it's liable to burst the cans, then again it sinks down until it only seems half full. Lots of air bubbles in it."

He had written the name of a girl in Boston on a card, and given it to Strong.

"You write her, and tell her how I—how I ended up," he finished, with a wistful little laugh. "Dare say we deserve it; I'm not much on ethics myself. She's a Christian girl; got me to go to church with her. She didn't realize we had Confucius a long time ago, and that Buddhism came before Christianity, and has all its cardinal principles. I humored her. She was a nice girl."

As he passed into Execution Yard he had shot out his cuffs over his gloves, hummed a little tune from a Gayety success, and waved airily to Strong.

"So long, captain," he had said.

If only he hadn't talked English, worn those clothes, and spoken about that girl. It brought the thing too near home. Strong had seen many executions; he could visualize this one so well. The long rows of silent, stolid Chinese folk, sitting on their haunches, with their hands tied behind their backs; the executioner stepping, almost blithely, along the line; each victim bending his neck; the flamelike descent of the sword in the afternoon sun, with its sharp, white-hot hiss; and then a trunkless head, that blinked in glass-eye fashion at a world in which it took no interest.

In the streets outside, the sound of steady marching, the clink of metal, the droning, guttural cries of the exiles as they marched from their homes, their

birthplace, was mingled with the heavy clatter of the Peking carts on the rough road, the wailing of infants, the dragging of heavy articles from the houses. The imperial mandate had gone forth; by sunrise the town of Seven Precious Dragons must be evacuated by its inhabitants; not a single man, woman, or child, save the soldiers, was to be within its walls; for, before the red streamers of dawn turned the sky pink as a warning of their approach, there would be redder streamers to greet them, and challenge their sanguinary hue. At five o'clock Seven Precious Dragons was to be set on fire, and the soldiers were to encamp outside until it burned to the ground.

Four hundred thousand tons of opium had already been located in the warehouses of the factories; the factories themselves, with all their complicated machinery and any papers bearing on the making of Shandoo were burned already. How much more opium, machinery, papers—recipes and such—the town might contain the officials did not know. Certainly none got past the blue-uniformed customs officials at the three gates of the town, who ransacked all household goods passing out, before marking the passports of the exiles satisfactorily.

They went, stolid, patient folk, for the most part quietly, leaving their property, their little shops, all that they held dear in the way of association, to begin life over again somehow, or perhaps to die of hunger, cold, disease in their exodus. Yardly Strong was glad it was a small town; there was only a matter of two thousand people—maybe less. He tried to tell himself it was best for them in the end, for the townspeople had existed only by reason of the opium manufacture, and, with the factories gone, trade conditions would be hopeless. But he was not an adept at comforting sophistries.

He tossed in the bed, finding little comfort, and very small prospect of sleep; the fact that he must be awake at four o'clock to assist in the destruction of the town kept him unquiet; a prey to remorse and regret. It was

useless for him to tell himself that he had nothing to do with the order; that his duty as a soldier was to obey.

Finally, he stiffened his muscles, determining that he would force sleep, held himself quiet, inert. It was a good counterfeit of sleep; everything was still except his brain.

He heard something move; something scratching like a rat on the outside of the wall near the head of his bed. It scratched cautiously, waited, scratched again. He heard something snap, as though a catch had been released. Just the slightest glimmer of light notified his closed eyes that there was illumination about, with which he had nothing to do. Felt-padded feet shuffled across the matted floor. The illumination became stronger. Strong could feel heat near his face, and hear rapid, frightened breathing. A trigger clicked.

He lay quite still, snoring regularly. There was a sigh of relief, the light moved away, the breathing became less labored. He waited a while, finally one eyelid quivered, unlocked itself from the other, and let a glint of the light in on a distended pupil.

In a little patch of light cast by a small lantern, he saw a squatting figure, its back turned to him, an old-fashioned revolver on the floor beside it. One of the boards of the floor was being levered up with a small steel crowbar, but levered gently, and so as to make a minimum of noise. Strong did not endeavor to reason why this intruder was in his room. He was accustomed to acting before thinking in moments of peril. His Luger pistols were under his pillow. He began to work his right hand cautiously toward one of them; but desisted immediately, for the board the stranger was levering had bounced upward with a snap; and the squatting person, instantly afraid, had grasped his weapon, and turned quickly to view the man on the bed.

Satisfied with Strong's quiescence, he turned away, pulling the board out of the way, and reaching down eagerly for something under the flooring. At that moment Strong fired at the lantern.

The noise of the shot and the disappearance of the light seemed simultaneous. Strong leaped directly for the spot where the light had been, and his hands encountered human flesh. He threw his left arm athwart the intruder's neck, caught a hand with his free one. Heavy pressure ensued; a bone snapped, there was a scream, a relaxation of the body, and a tumble to the floor.

Strong fired his revolver in air. He had dropped it as he clinched; now his fingers encountered it on the floor. The momentary pink puff showed a slinking person with a dangling arm arising and groping wildly. He hurled himself forward. He did not wish to kill. There had been too much killing to-day, and the person was Chinese.

He had rocked upward, fastening his hand on one of the teak taborets. Here there were matches. He groped, seized the box, lit the candle. The intruder was cowering over by the wall. A part of the wall hung open; evidently a secret passage.

"Go the way you came," he said in Chinese, pointing the weapon in his hand. "Go. I do not wish to kill you. Go!"

He advanced as he spoke, the flame of the candle seeming to drift over his left shoulder as he held it high. He could not see the face of the other; the uninjured arm had been raised, the kimono sleeve of it hiding the features.

"Go!" said Strong impatiently.

The man paused, moaning a little over his arm; apparently undecided. Then he did a bold thing. He strode forward to meet Strong, and, still shielding his own face, stared into the American's eyes.

"The box—there!" he said, speaking with restraint. "It is my property. I came for it. May I take it?"

Strong hardly heard him. He knew only that he was showing mercy to a burglar, a pillager; a might-have-been murderer; and that the man seemed to be ungrateful. He pushed him back to the wall at the point of his Luger, backed him to the secret passage, from which came a gust of dank air that danced the candle flame about.

"Into that—and no more talk," he said sternly. "Get into it and go before I shoot. Into it, I say."

The man threw over a leg; Strong pushed the rest of his body after. He heard a scuffling sound, a heavy fall. Craning his neck over and holding the candle high, he saw that the man had fallen down the steep and narrow steps—a good ten feet. He slammed shut the swinging panel. There was a soldier's bayonet on the table near the bed. He drove it into the panel, with sturdy blows from the butt of his Luger; drove it deep, half its length.

"That settles the secret passage," he muttered, satisfied. It was some relief to think he had spared life when he could have taken it.

"I wonder what the fellow wanted?"

He turned to the flooring that had been disturbed. A teakwood box, highly polished, was standing on its beam ends, half out of the aperture, half in it. He forced open the lock by hammering on it with the ever-useful Luger.

There were six jade plates inside; good green jade, worked with Chinese characters. He could read Chinese fairly well; but then, as this signifies he had memorized a large number of words, it also signifies that there were thousands he had *not* memorized, and the words on the plates—or one should say the characters—were in the latter class. Not that he bothered much over the inscription; the intrinsic value of the plates was sufficient to have warranted a burglarious entry. No doubt one of the servants of the Hung household—

He put them back into the teakwood box, inwardly congratulating himself on the intrusion. Here were six valuable souvenirs. He would ship them to the "little girl" as soon as he reached Shanghai.

Meanwhile, sleep was impossible. He lit all the candles again, picked up a limp-leather book, and tried to read; but the sound of the marching feet, the little cries and sounds of the exodus, drove him instead into a profound train

of thought; one that included thoughts of what they were doing in New York just about then; what shows were playing; and how the horseshoe at the opera looked. There was "the little girl," too; there always is a girl; and his was so lonely a life. He chafed at the poverty that had sent him overseas in search of wealth, only to find himself, at twenty-seven, a captain in his imperial Chinese majesty's forces at thirty-five hundred dollars (silver) per annum. It would be a long time before he could go home wealthy on that.

And how he wanted to go home! He was in the sort of humor that makes men talk about "God's country." They mean it at the time, and it is not for us to make easy japes concerning it. Yardly Strong had borne with privation, loneliness, and homesickness for two years now; in the Philippine constabulary, the Canton customs—the old imperial maritime, and now this! The day of bloodshed and burning had put the climax on it all. He was tired—dead tired.

When the notes of a bugle roused him out of his reverie to communicate the fact that he was to get his men under arms to make way for the conflagration, his orderly entered. To him he gave the box with the jade plates, promising him an extra yen or two for its care.

Later, from the near-by hills, he watched the black, thick smoke rise in a cloud over Seven Precious Dragons, and out of it come the leaping tongues of the fire monster; he saw them mount high and higher; saw buildings crumble; felt the ground shake under him as the dynamite exploded in the proper places; and finally saw it all reduced to a long, low-lying red furnace with a thin trail of smoke creeping over it. To his nostrils was wafted the pungent odor of the burned opium.

"Well, that's the end of the pen-yen habit," said Holmes, his sunburned lieutenant. "A few million drug users will have to discover some new way of banishing their sorrows now."

"Nonsense!" said an artillery officer, who had been standing near by, field

glasses in hand. "There's apt to be one person escape with the secret of making Shandoo, and then all this butchery and arson will have been useless."

"Looks like we made a pretty good job of it," said Strong curtly.

"But if one person with the secret did escape, eh?" queried Holmes. "Good

Lord; how I'd like to be that fellow! He'd be the richest man in the world in a year's time—that is, if he'd be connected with the right people."

Over the edge of the fire line, a rim of shell pink showed in the eastern sky.

"Let's hope nobody did," was Strong's sober response. "Let's hope that dawn stands for something."

I.—THE FIRST ROUND

CHAPTER I.

THE MURDER OF YARDLY STRONG.

YORKE NORROY stood, a strange, brooding figure, by the window—strange in that those who knew him only as an elegant *insouciant* should have found him brooding. Important disclosures which would have brought a nation to gasping often left him quite calm, betraying little concern, except, perhaps, for a flick of dust on his impeccable boots, slight disarrangement in the set of his collar. But the tale the secretary of state had told in the present instance left too many unexplored fields to the imagination for personal appearance to be considered, even by so arrant a dandy as the secretary of the Washington Cotillion Club, to which office Mr. Norroy had recently been elected, after much persuasion had been exerted by its members to allow them to make him a candidate. Those same members were not apt to see ever a Yorke Norroy who took anything seriously enough to brood over it.

Imperatively important as the cabinet minister knew this thunderclap of an affair to be, he realized that it was even more calamitously far-reaching by Norroy's attitude. Norroy's belief in himself had been so well justified in the past that his habit was to make no moment of tasks assigned him. The rescue of state prisoners from fortress prisons so grimly guarded as Kron and St. Basil, the extrication of a prince and of a newly elected South American president from seemingly impossible positions, the alterations of boundary lines

on the map of the world, the acquisition of new territory for the United States, and so on—these had been received in no such ominous silence as this by Yorke Norroy. The instructions given in this very room by one of these men to the other, had they been overheard, at times would have meant as many separate armings of nations. Yet in this instance was involved nothing except what would occur within a space of eagle-ruled territory between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

The secretary of state ventured to break the silence by saying something to this effect. But he said it in a tone that lacked conviction.

"True," agreed Norroy. "It is merely my own war. War between Yorke Norroy and one hundred thousand million or more little demons, each armed with a deadly dart. War against dollars, Mr. Secretary, in a country where dollars do anything. And dollars have started with murder—cold-blooded, calculated, mercenary murder. Do you know why I go into this with a somewhat heavy heart, Mr. Secretary? Because, if I am to succeed, I can see blood on my hands. I fight to win. There is no question of superior brains where a wholesale murder is concerned. It seems I must murder, too. And, worst of all, I must be ready to murder only subordinates. The fat principal sits rubbing his scented hands, protected by the vast machinery of law that we ourselves uphold. I have schemed and plotted with you and with my own agents to help keep the dollars and the lives of such men in safety, thinking it was for our country. But I give you

my word—a thing as unbreakable as an india-rubber ball—that if necessity compels the sacrifice of a single subordinate, I'll not stop until I've done for Philip Hurrish, too."

"Yorke!" protested the secretary of state. "Yorke!"

"Harry," returned the secret agent, "it is the only condition on which I agree to get those plates."

"To get them—that is enough; that's the country's danger—the danger to every American of this and the next generation. The enemy on the outside—we've learned how to fight him. But let this secret enemy continue to exist, and—don't let's talk of it, Yorke. It's the real race suicide our mutual friend mistakenly ascribes to another sign of the times. It's——"

"Mr. Secretary," interrupted Norroy, becoming official in his manner again, and smiling, "I have just spent nearly ten minutes defining *what* it is to myself. Now, let's get to facts. Facts are sane things; theories anarchic. First, Anderson's report:

"Yardly Strong, captain, imperial Chinese army, murdered in his lodgings on the Street of the Maimed Linnet. His belongings ransacked. Some jewelry of slight value taken, no doubt, as a blind. Archie Bell, agent of Philip Hurrish (see my report nineteenth instant) still in evidence. Believe all suspects held to be guiltless, although doubtless one or more will be executed by local authorities to 'save their faces.' Murder undoubtedly committed through instrumentality of Bell. No trace of plates found. I attended magisterial examination of scene of murder.

ANDERSON."

The message was in code; through long acquaintance with which, Norroy read as easily as he did English, French, or German. The name signed to the report was that of an officer of the United States army, who served his government in a dual rôle, for he was also of that far-reaching service over which Norroy presided.

Norroy took up the second message, and read:

"As an American official, have been accorded every courtesy in Yardly Strong's case. Send this message hurriedly; may mean much. Three postal receipts for three registered packages found in Strong's pocket-

book; all articles consigned to 'Miss Holly Lea, care *Dramatic Mercury*, New York City.' One kimono, value sixty-two yen; one set tortoise-shell combs, et cetera, and pongee material, value one hundred and ten yen; one set ornaments, unspecified, value one thousand two hundred yen. Postage on last very heavy. Do not know how long it will be before Archie Bell gains this same information. Weight seems to indicate last package was plates. Small value set on it shows Strong ignorant at time. Sent three months ago.

ANDERSON."

"I should have known about this long ago, Mr. Secretary," said Norroy, wrinkling his forehead.

"Strong didn't take Anderson in his confidence until two weeks ago," the secretary retorted acidly. "As you know, Anderson wasn't detailed to Shan-Hai-Kuan to look into the matter. If we gave the thing any thought at all, we thought these devastating plates had been destroyed. Strong picked them up by accident, of course. From what Anderson wires, even a Chinese would have hard work transcribing the words carved on them, they're so deeply incrustated with dirt, mold, and Heaven knows what. Strong didn't tell Anderson what he'd done with them; Anderson thought he had them somewhere about his lodgings or locked up in the barracks."

Norroy nodded impatiently.

"It was only when Hurrish's agent, Bell, made Strong that extraordinary offer that Strong began to suspect what he had in the plates—naturally, Harry. And, Anderson having been his classmate at the Point, and Strong having to get somebody's advice, confidences were exchanged. Anderson—keep your eye on Anderson; he'll be useful to me in the future; great discernment—had sense enough to see the peril to our country if Hurrish managed to get those plates in. How much did you pay Strong for them?"

"One hundred thousand yen," replied the secretary of state. "And I think it was rather decent of the poor chap to accept it, considering how much more he could have gotten from Hurrish's agent."

"Bell trebled, I think you said?" asked

Norroy. "Pardon me for getting all these details straight, but remember I haven't got the cobwebs of that Turkish affair out of my head yet, and I left a lot of unfinished work to cut down here as soon as you wired you wanted me. Carson Huntley and I sat up all night on the express coming here while I explained the Turkish thing to him. I hope it isn't too big for Carson. However, Bell trebled your price, eh?"

Norroy glanced at his watch every other minute. For he had the Congressional Limited to catch.

"Bell trebled it," went on Norroy, after the secretary had nodded. "Then Captain Strong paid for his slight attack of spread-eagleism with his life. He boasted to Anderson how he had called Bell and his employer, Hurrish, human bloodsuckers; told Bell that sooner than sell him the plates to work incalculable harm to humanity, he would break them into little bits and burn them. Bell apparently feared this, for while Strong was at Anderson's rooms telling him this, and the rest that shows in Anderson's cablegram of the day before——"

Norroy picked up another cablegram, and read:

"Strong says the only way for him to deliver plates is to journey to United States. Have advanced him thousand for expenses trip. Deposit balance his credit Tenth National, New York. You can trust Strong. Feel highly elated.

"I say," continued Norroy, "while Strong was closing his bargain with us at Anderson's rooms, Bell adopted the high hand, and had Strong's rooms broken into and searched. Strong returned before the search was completed, and his murder followed."

Norroy rose as he spoke, glancing uneasily at his watch. The secretary of state had followed his reasoning with admiring nods.

"You've reconstructed the situation precisely, Yorke, I think," he said. "Now, the only thing I'm afraid of is: Did Strong warn this girl he sent the plates to?"

"Give him credit for more wisdom

than that," answered Norroy, now viewing the dial of the watch as he would a personal enemy. "Afraid she might get to talking to other women—and in the theatrical profession, wireless telegraphy was invented long before Marconi hit it."

He sprang to the telephone as it rang on the secretary's desk.

"Yes, yes, yes; long distance, yes."

He put his hand over the receiver.

"Wammell at last," he said; then quickly into the receiver: "Yes, yes, Wammell! Where's she playing this week? Freefield, New Jersey? Freefield—where's that? Good! I'll motor from Trenton. Get me there—at Trenton, I mean—by telephone. And have a man and a motor waiting for me. Taking the C. L. Lanier watching Hurrish's house still? Right! And Furnival the Hurrish office? Good! Keep 'em there. At Trenton, mind!"

He hung up.

As he stood at the door, a lean, sinewy, bronzed, and capable figure, the secretary's weary eyes lighted; for Norroy, as he now looked, personified the man above the law, who kept laws inviolate by breaking them himself.

"Lord pity Hurrish!" he said, with a smile.

He was speaking of Philip Hurrish, the chief figure in certain malodorous investigations by Congress. Soldiers in the Philippines had held their noses when they opened Hurrish's tinned meats, and, if they ate them at all, smothered them in condiments. Had they become vegetarians, instead, the cholera, dysentery, and fever would not have found them such easy prey. Philip Hurrish, whose factory and wholesale drug supply corporation furnished cocaine, morphine, and a sirupy opium paste to thousands of illicit peddlers and unscrupulous druggists, with labels on them that described them as "cough sirups," "universal panaceas," and so forth.

"I only ask," said Norroy, cutting the air viciously with his wandlike walking stick, "I only ask that he comes my way."

CHAPTER II.

"GENTLEMAN" OR "SPORT"?

"*Give Me Honest Men for Employees and Partners, and Honest Men for Competitors,*" was a motto that hung over the desk of Philip Hurrish. The sentiment sounds most admirable; just the sort of thing for a vestryman to have said; it made Hurrish smile ironically when he read it.

Honest employees, partners, competitors; they would not cheat. *He* might cheat as much as he liked; even that would not tempt honest men to imitate him.

"*Give Me Honesty in Others; It Makes Them Easier to Cheat,*" is the real translation of Mr. Hurrish's motto through life.

Being so great a lover of rectitude—in others—it seems strange that Philip Hurrish employed Lycurgus Crawe, whose reputation was as bad as Hurrish's meat; but Hurrish had faced before the difficulty of finding honest partners for a swindle; hence "Curgy Crawe," as his photographs were captioned under the Bertillon system of police identification before he rose high enough in shady dealing to have his likenesses removed from "The Hall of Fame."

Even so, Hurrish did not practice being seen with Crawe in public. There were some appearances still to be observed by a vestryman of a fashionable church. Yet Crawe had come direct from a long interview in the private library of Hurrish's house on Madison Avenue, and had been driven to Freefield, New Jersey, in the eighty-ninety foreign car that had won the cup for Hurrish in the fall of that year.

Another car, almost its duplicate, which had been hurried from New York to meet Norroy at Trenton, stood, minus its sparking plug, along the curb in front of the Freefield Opera House; around it a somewhat curious crowd that increased when Crawe left his machine to keep it company. Such monsters as these, with long, thin, cruel-looking hoods and searchlights like the eyes of dinosaurs, stopped seldom in Freefield,

a town where uninteresting things were manufactured, to the manufacture of which forty thousand people were necessary.

You see many persons of Crawe's type on Broadway; they are chiefly remarkable for their fear of what waiters, chauffeurs, and hat-room boys think of them; they wish to purchase drinks for everybody at the bars of their second-class clubs; and their answer to any implied merit in anything is: "Does it get the money?"

Crawe took a seat in a stage box of the Freefield Opera House, and yawned ostentatiously through the performance of an act of trapeze performers, tried to make the yawn more ostentatious when a ventriloquist performed for twenty minutes more, and watched with quickened interest after a stage hand had placed cards announcing "Miss Holly Lea" both right and left of the proscenium arch.

Norroy had seen Crawe enter; hence he huddled up so that he might be less conspicuous in his seat at the end of one of the exit aisles. Curgy Crawe leaned forward in the box as the girl came on. Norroy seemed asleep. The girl was dressed as a Pierrette. A man in the wings operated a "baby lime" for her benefit; this, from her song, one gathered represented "The Mischievous Moon."

Her voice was small and sweet; her gestures had the charming awkwardness of extreme youth; but she displayed the too rare talent of expressive pantomime.

She came for her second song as a boy. She was thin, small-boned, but finely made, with small hands and feet, and now, with the Pierrette cap off, very, very young.

"A child—to be mixed up in a thing like this!" thought Norroy regretfully. He glanced at Crawe, who was watching Miss Lea with absorbed interest.

Crawe's affiliation with Hurrish and his hasty departure from Manhattan had been duly reported to Norroy by the direct long-distance call at Trenton.

"I must get to the girl before Crawe does," Norroy told himself.

"Archie Bell trebled it!" kept running through his mind. The state department could not afford to bid against Hurrish; the secretary of the treasury would countenance no such expenditures. The amount paid into Strong's account at the Tenth National was the highest the secretary of state could squeeze out of the financial secretary. That was now Holly Lea's. Another cablegram received from Anderson since Norroy left Washington had been telephoned to Wammell, and a report of it included in the Trenton message to Norroy; Strong had left a will—everything to the girl.

The law gave her that. Norroy's business was to play on her conscience as Anderson had played on Strong's. And he knew if she acceded that he must do what Anderson had not done for Strong—he must protect her from an enemy as ruthless to one sex as to the other.

Holly Lea's third dress was as typical of the "family vaudeville" house as the single long-stemmed rose she carried—a trailing black gown.

Toward the end of Miss Lea's act, Norroy made his way behind the scenes. No one interfered with him. Vaudeville performers have too many licensed parasites for strict rules about strangers "back stage" to be enforced, and Norroy knew this as he knew most little human apparently useless things.

Holly Lea's dressing room was No. 4. It was dingy, damp, gaseous, lighted, and apparently heated, only by a single jet.

"I don't mind smoking at all," Miss Lea said, as Norroy rose and apologized at her entrance a little later. She had seen men like him, but Yardly Strong had been the nearest approximation she had known personally; and Strong had served too much of his time in out-of-the-way holes and corners to have preserved niceties of grooming.

She waited expectantly for Norroy to explain his intrusion. Norroy studied her a moment before adding anything to his apology.

"Why aren't you on Broadway?" he asked finally.

"I couldn't get anything but chorus work," she answered, quite simply. She closed the dressing-room door, and sat down with her back to the mirror—a very un-Thespian position—facing him. "Are you in the profession?"

Norroy shook his head.

"I have a friend, though, who's to produce 'The Devonshire Maid' in a month or so. He's been looking for a girl who looks innocent and eighteen, and who also can dance, act, and sing well enough not to counteract the other qualifications. I can get you that part."

Her eyes grew suddenly wet with tears. She considered Norroy through them.

"Why?" she asked, in a choked voice.

"It's a rather long story, and I have a very short time to tell it in," answered Norroy, glancing at the door, as though he expected it to succumb to some Joshualike influence. Crawe wouldn't wait long after Holly's turn before coming "back."

"Did you love Captain Yardly Strong?" Norroy asked crisply, and eyed her. Her manner was undecided.

"That's enough," said Norroy.

"I suppose I *should* have loved him. He was very kind to me," acknowledged the girl. "But love? I've wanted to get on so much. I've only thought about that. I've worked *so* hard; I've spent everything I made on my voice, on my dancing. I've crossed to Europe second class, just to study, and lived in the dingiest places. I met him in Paris. He insisted on buying me an evening gown, and he showed me all I've ever seen of 'life'—that is, if you call gayety 'life.' And he's sent me presents since. But I never said I loved him, although I *did* tell him I'd marry him if I wasn't well known on Broadway by the time he came back. But you said—" Her voice choked again. "About 'The Devonshire Maid'? Has that anything to do with Captain Strong?"

"Captain Strong—" Norroy began, wondering how to tell her.

"Something's happened to him?" asked Holly Lea, in a pitying voice. Norroy nodded gravely. She interpreted intuitively. "Not dead?" she gasped.

She put her head between her hands, and cried softly. The tears were genuine enough. She was young, life was opening before her, and death was terrible.

"He was murdered," said Norroy, fearful of the expected knock of Crawe, and galloping hastily on, overriding her startled exclamation. "He sent you six green plates that afterward proved to be valuable to a number of people. It was on that account he was murdered. One of the employees of the man responsible for his death is in the theater now. He may be back here at any moment. He will offer you a great deal of money for the plates. I offer you the engagement in 'The Devonshire Maid' and——"

He mentioned the sum left her by Strong's will, taking care not to indicate it was already hers by law. It would be some time before she knew.

She picked at the articles on her dressing table, dabbing at her tear-swollen eyes in the mirror, repeating Strong's name at intervals with a dry sob.

"Poor Captain Strong!" she said, and burst into tears again.

"My child," whispered Norroy, "I'm sorry to have to bring you such news and to make you an offer in the same breath. But those six plates—it's your duty to give them to me. I'll destroy them before your eyes. The other man wants to use them to bring profit to himself and mischief to the world in general. As much as I feel for you in Captain Strong's case, I must insist on an answer."

"I don't want the money," she said, not meeting his eyes. "But if you mean it about 'The Devonshire Maid,' I'll give you the plates on the night I open in New York."

She refused to look at him. He surveyed her, pursing his lips, and nodding his head.

"You—don't—want—the — money?" he asked slowly.

She shook her head.

"Only the part?"

She nodded.

"And you're afraid I won't keep my

word if you give me the plates beforehand? My dear child, why so low an opinion of human nature in general?"

"It isn't that," she muttered. "Only—only—well, you'll understand on the opening night, if there ever is an opening night on Broadway for me."

The knock so long feared by Norroy came at last, and Lycurgus Crawe's unctuous, would-be "refined" tone colored the words that asked for admittance from the other side of the door.

"You accept my terms, then?" asked Norroy. He suspected she was only too glad to do so, but there was no time to go into suspicions now; greater difficulties were in his path than he had foreseen. He must keep this Crawe person chained up in Freefield or near by for a day or so in order to have a fair start in the race.

"Will you permit me to act for you in the case of the man who's knocking now? The one—I told you—employed by the one responsible for Captain Strong's death?"

He barely breathed the words.

She turned and faced Norroy, meeting his eyes for the first time. She put her hands in his.

"You trust me?" asked Norroy.

She nodded with childlike solemnity.

Norroy breathed relief. He was free to play his game with Crawe. He opened the door, observing Lycurgus in all the vainglory of a dress coat that fitted but did not become him, a large white flower in his buttonhole, and hands like a boxer's in four-ounce gloves. An expensive label decorated his half-smoked cigar—enough in itself to damn him with Norroy.

The secret agent did not permit Crawe to speak first. As Norroy had turned the handle of the door to admit Crawe, he had by one dexterous movement and several grimaces imparted the air of the "sporting man" to his own impeccable appearance; merely tilting his hat a trifle toward his right ear, jerking his necktie up until it seemed a trifle too full for one of his discriminating taste, and twisted his mouth for speech on the same side favored by his hat. The metamorphosis effected by

these slight changes left one who would argue seriously about the great gulf dividing the appearance of "gentleman" and "sport" with no brief at all. Crawe saw in Norroy a brother. Norroy's speech confirmed his sight.

"Well, friend?" queried Norroy, patting the tilted hat, and simulating perfect paralysis of the left side of his mouth.

"Seen you before, ain't I?" asked Mr. Crawe, holding out one of the four-ounce white-gloved hands.

"Maybe so. I'm a Frisco boy. Poodle Dog, Techau's, Marchand's, with a drop in over to Bassity's and the other joints nightly—missin' nothin', pal," Norroy assured him genially and with a flash of the left canine tooth. "Face's familiar, sport, but the name gets me."

He looked inquiring.

"Hemingway," said Crawe.

"So it is, ain't it? Miss Lea, 'low me—Mr. Hemingway. Old frien', m' dear Holly. The coming Edna May, Hemingway, old pal. Buried up to now, but not after a five years' contract with yours truly has been signed, same havin' been done to-night. Broadway for this little lady, and the brighter they shine's none too bright for her. We Frisco boys show you New Yorkers lots about show business. The old eye, here!"

Norroy evidently meant the one he closed knowingly.

"Never misses, pal Hemingway—the old eye! Sees the little lady. Says 'Broadway—in a minute. Money talks. Put up or shut up.' Mine just won't behave when you talk to it like that; regular jack in box. Nothing doing in the contract line, pally, if that's your lay coming 'back' to-night. Little lady closes here to-night; I buy off her contract, take her to your little old island in the big buzz box lying outside—get an eyeful of it? S'posin' you and I, Hemingway, old pal, step outside, and find a place we can get a wet gill or two while the little lady puts on regular clothes? Hey?"

Crawe smiled uneasily but ingratiatingly.

"Lucky dog!" he said, and elbowed Norroy. "Don't grudge me just a minute of business—not the same kind as yours," he added hastily. "Not theatrical—private."

"That's what they all say!" chanted Norroy, dispensing with the use of an eye for a second, as before. "But nay, Hem, me brave old pal, it's nix and never do well on that. It's the kibosh, the saxi, and the horse laugh for *him*. Lead that 'bull' into the alley and tell him to behave himself. He's too frisky for such an old bull; besides, he's inside thy neighbor's wire fence, where the sagebrush and alfalfa is exclusively neighbor's."

He took Crawe by the arm.

"I know where we can get the finest little gill ever poured out in Freefield," said Mr. Yorke Norroy, in tones of their kind, but never connected for a moment with such a person as Norroy in the minds of debutantes, chaperons, and fellow clubmen.

"I tell you," protested Crawe, beginning to lose his temper, "that this is private."

"And I tell you," returned Norroy, making the orifice through which he spoke smaller, if possible, "that there's nothing private's going to pass between you and the new star of Jack Rothwell—not this night, nor yet any other nights. So if you've got no taste for Frisco hospitality in the matter of liquid gills, speak up, and give us a tell. What's the i-dea?"

Holly Lea spoke for the first time, addressing Crawe:

"I don't know what your business is"—she had taken her cue quickly—"but this gentleman is right when he tells you I won't see you alone. So if you have anything to say—"

"Very well," submitted Crawe, but with an ill grace. "I'm a collector; heard you had some green jade that's very ancient, very valuable—you see, I'm honest; I don't conceal from you the fact that it is valuable, Miss Lea."

Crawe basked in his own self-approval.

"I'm honest. I could cheat you if I wanted to. But I wouldn't. Some men

might, but I mightn't. Not Ly—not John Hemingway; not old John!"

"Man who speaks so respectful about his honesty ain't generally developed a familiar acquaintance with it—can't call it by its first name, so to speak," remarked Norroy.

"Meaning me?" asked Crawe, turning suddenly, and showing a vicious mouth.

"Meanin' you, old sport. I got you the minute you stepped over the threshold, as they say in the novels. Lady's under my protection now. She's got something you want to buy, has she? Well, we can bet you're offering less'n it's worth—we'll take that for granted. What's the offer?"

"The offer for six ordinary-looking green-jade plates is a thousand dollars a plate. Take any one of them to any antique dealer, and see if he'll give you more than a hundred apiece—if you don't believe I'm honest," said Crawe, with a very good assumption of misunderstanding and outraged rectitude.

"Surely not those rather dirty plates you showed me just now?" asked Norroy, turning to Holly, his manner greatly surprised. "Why, they aren't worth any——"

"See; what did I tell you?" demanded Crawe, more virtuous than ever. He trembled with ill-concealed impatience. "You've got the plates here—in this room?"

"Why, yes," returned Norroy promptly. "And I'll answer for her. Turn over the money, and they're yours."

A palsy seemed to have settled on Crawe. He had difficulty in reaching for his bill fold. When he produced it, he showed a number of crisp-thousand-dollar notes. He selected six of their number, extending them to the girl. She took them. At the same moment Norroy plucked the bill fold from Crawe, extracted the remainder of the notes—a baker's dozen—and crammed them into his own pocket.

Crawe sprang at him; but a look at Norroy's face sent a chill through him. As he afterward told Hurrish: "The ugliest pair of eyes I ever saw. Peo-

ple with eyes like that don't stop at anything, Mr. Hurrish."

"So you came prepared to pay twenty thousand for those plates, did you, Hemingway, old sport?" he asked, with an unpleasant smile. "Very well; we'll take your twenty thousand—instead of six. You needn't do any yelling about it, because you wouldn't get it back, and I'd have to strong-arm you and throw you out of the window—which some people don't like. Eh, me brave Hemingway?"

"Give me the plates, then!" snarled Crawe.

"Why, sure!" returned Norroy. "They're in that little dressing case at your feet. Just open it; you'll find 'em there, all correct."

As Norroy had expected, Crawe wasted no time dropping on his knees, jerking the case toward him, and fumbling with the lock.

His back was toward Norroy. The secret agent had seen to that. There must be no outcry in a dressing room. Yet Norroy must detain Crawe until he found out just what Holly Lea was concealing from him; Norroy knew he could not afford to have all the battalions of Hurrish's spies and gorillas turned on him until he had the plates located, at least. Other men might have taken Holly's word that the plates would be delivered at the time of her Broadway opening, but Norroy studied manners and gestures, and paid little attention to words.

Norroy knew he was almost as far away from the plates as Crawe was himself when that worthy opened the dressing case, bending his head as he rifled it. Norroy gauged the exact distance, swung lightly on his toes, and struck Crawe at the angle he had decided upon. Unconsciousness was instantaneous. Crawe crumpled up like a sawdustless doll.

One of those monstrosities known as a "wardrobe trunk" stood open in the corner of the dressing room. "Norroy pulled the two sections of the wardrobe trunk wider apart, pushed Crawe into one of them, and closed the other on him.

"The key," he said briefly to Holly Lea.

"He'll suffocate, won't he?" she asked. She was too interested to be shocked.

"Not to offend you," returned the secret agent, with a slight smile, "your trunk has suffered too much at the hands of baggage smashers to be airtight. There are numberless holes in it for the air to percolate through. But he may recover consciousness at any minute, so we must work fast. Pack any few heirlooms that you may deem indispensable. The clothes and other articles you've got now won't do for your new position. To-morrow you must be completely outfitted. But anything that's personally sacred?"

"Nothing," she returned, rather forlornly. She slipped into her rather shabby ponyskin coat. "I'm ready now."

Norroy sent for the manager of the theater, and enticed several stage hands into the dressing room, paid them, and had them carry the wardrobe trunk to the waiting motor, where, with great difficulty, it was lashed on. He paid the theater manager for dispensing with Holly's services for the remainder of the week—paid liberally—and Norroy and the girl were escorted with much ceremony by manager and chief usher to the car.

Crawe's car, a sleepy chauffeur on the front seat, stood a little way down the street. Norroy smiled.

"New York," he said to his own driver.

CHAPTER III.

THE JAILING OF MR. CRAWE.

The motor crept slowly, for the most part, from Freefield to Edgware, the next town. The snow which had been falling steadily since early in the afternoon had healed the hurts of fields and forests, hiding all damage done by its ungenerous cousin, the frost. From the black shapes of farmhouses and barns, orange light came out to lie gratefully on the soft velvet carpet, and the pur-

plish spirals of smoke hung motionless above it.

Holly Lea, her heart beating wildly at this new enterprise in which she found herself, had forgotten all about Mr. Crawe until, at a particularly desolate spot, Norroy bade the chauffeur stop. Together they unlashed the trunk. Crawe's body tumbled out. They placed it in the bottom of the car, covered it with a lap robe, left the trunk in a ditch by the side of the road, and continued on as speedily as the snow would permit toward Edgware. Norroy had not spoken since they entered the car. He smoked innumerable cigarettes, and occasionally glanced at Holly, whose little face was rosy with the cold, whose eyes sparkled, and whose demeanor was care-free.

"What barbarians by nature women are!" he thought. There lay Crawe at her feet, still senseless, and she hardly noticed him. She was thinking of "The Devonshire Maid." She was also thinking that she must be very much on her guard if she was to deceive so astute a person as Mr. Yorke Norroy concerning those plates. So far——

Norroy leaned over and whispered directions to the chauffeur—a minor member of the secret diplomatic corps—who grinned cheerfully. The car proceeded to the Edgware police station. Norroy descended, passed between the two green lights, and entered the bare room, where a sergeant sat behind some high railings.

"Have to report a case of attempted highway robbery, Mr. Sergeant," said Norroy politely. "Two men made a felonious attempt to hold us up as we came out of Freefield. We had to fight back; wounded one man, who ran away. The other we stunned. Got him out in the motor; he's still senseless, too. We must go on to New York. What are we to do with him?"

"Do with him!" cried the sergeant ecstatically. Nothing ever happened in Edgware, and this was his opportunity. "You bring him in here—I'll show you!"

Between them, Norroy and the chauffeur brought in the body of Lycurgus

Crawe. He was carried to the matron's room; a doctor was summoned. Norroy made out the charge against the supposed highwayman, told a realistic story, gave a false name and address in New York, and impressed upon his hearers that the prisoner was the notorious Lycurgus Crawe, last heard of as an employee of Philip Hurrish. The sergeant's eyes widened at every word. He foresaw yellow-journal notoriety, a trail in sleepy Edgware implicating well-known names, perhaps a woman in the case—for he saw Holly Lea sitting in the motor.

"I will appear to testify cheerfully," said Norroy. "My telephone number is also written on the card."

The sergeant shook hands with him as with a benefactor. Norroy returned to the car. He did not speak to Holly until they had left all the lights of Edgware behind them and were passing the splendid glare of the blast furnaces on the outskirts of the town. She was still giggling over what had been done to Mr. Crawe.

"I wonder," said Norroy, touching her arm lightly, "I wonder if you are laughing at your own cleverness, Miss Holly?"

Something in his tone froze her smile. She saw his eyes in the snow glare. She tried to speak, stammered, hesitated. She did not meet his gaze.

"What do you mean?" she stammered.

"My dear child," said Norroy, letting the sinister light fade from his eyes, "you see a chance to shine on Broadway in 'The Devonshire Maid.' More, I truly believe you were destined for a musical-comedy favorite. A man comes along and offers you the chance you've been awaiting for so many years. Are you going to refuse it? No; you are going to seize the opportunity with both hands and hold on for dear life."

"I do—don't understand you," she returned, but in a tone that implied she understood him very well, but hoped that he would not understand her.

"You see, you weren't meant to be dishonest," went on Norroy kindly. "A dishonest person would have taken the

money I offered, too. But you only wanted the chance to prove you were worthy of the opportunity. So you put off the delivery of the plates until you should have had your chance, didn't you? I'm not angry. Tell me!"

"I really don't understand you at all."

Holly was quite cool now.

"Really," ruminated Norroy, "it's a pity to waste you on mere stage playing. What an admirable assistant you would make! You can act, little girl. But the minute you said you wouldn't take the money I understood. You confirmed my suspicions by telling me you wouldn't give me the plates until you had your Broadway opening."

"Well, wasn't I right?" asked Holly indignantly. "Once you got the plates, would you do anything for me?"

"You mean: 'Once I found you didn't have the plates, would I do anything for you?'" returned Norroy steadily.

Again she failed to meet his gaze.

"Why, what do you mean?" she managed to articulate, but with some difficulty.

"I mean that, after your Broadway opening, you'd have said: 'My dear sir, I'm very sorry I haven't the plates, but I've made good in this play, so whose business is it?' But I can't afford to wait that long for the plates. You'll get your chance at the part just the same as though you had them; also, you'll get the money—it's at the Tenth National Bank now, waiting for you; but—really—and when I say 'really' I mean it—you *must* tell me what's become of them."

She did not immediately answer. Soon, however, she touched Norroy's arm.

"I suppose you're a professional detective?" she whispered. "I didn't know they were so clever."

"None of that, Miss Holly," said Norroy, smiling. "Out with the truth about the plates."

"I'm sorry," she murmured. "You don't know how sorry I am. But I sold them."

Norroy checked an ejaculation, and lighted a cigarette, watching her over the flame of the burning match.

"And I didn't get much for them, either," she complained bitterly. "Only a few hundred dollars. But I had to have new costumes. They wouldn't book my act with last year's clothes, and the plates were the only things I had that I could get any money on. So I sold them."

Norroy remained silent. Only a few hours ago this affair, so tremendously important was it, had reduced him to brooding so obsessing that he stared out from the Gothic structure in which he had stood to a street that he knew better than any in the world, and saw nothing. Now he brooded again, but this time he saw many things. He saw millions imperiled through the cruel necessity of a young girl needing a few trumpery clothes with which to keep herself employed and fed. He saw a chase opening up before him apparently endless—the chase after those six green plates. For just how much of their secret was told on each plate he did not know; just which plate held the unknown, much sought thing to be learned he had no means of telling. She had sold them! He did not hoodwink himself into believing that he would find them in the shop she had left them. He knew without calculating that the theatrical season had begun about the time she had received the plates. She must have sold them soon after they came. Goods did not stay in shops that long.

Millions—a whole nation, perhaps—imperiled through a child's momentary necessity! The thought repeated itself many times in his mind. How could one find tragedy in an existence where the hurt of so many was a tree that had burgeoned from roots firmly set in comedy?

He laughed. She had never heard a laugh just like his. It frightened her a little. The glow of his cigarette lit his bronzed, clearly defined features. He saw that he had alarmed her, and patted her hand kindly.

"It's too bad; means a lot of trouble, maybe," he said, in his most careless tone. "But we must find them, that's all. When did you sell them?"

Her answer confirmed his fears. "But I intended to get them back for you before the opening night," she assured him earnestly. "I guess the man I sold them to still has them. I'd do anything to get them back."

"I may remind you of that," said Norroy. "A woman is useful in such affairs sometimes. You may have to lie, cheat, even steal. Will you do any of those things?"

"All of them," she said promptly, feeling for his hand. "All of them. Really I will."

"Why?" asked Norroy.

"I just don't know," she answered. "I've lied, of course; I tried to cheat you in this, too, didn't I? But I've never stolen, and never intended to. And I haven't cared about doing the other things. But somehow I've had a feeling since you first came into my dressing room and spoke about those plates—a woman *does* feel things that way, you know. A feeling of bigness, of something to be done that's worth while, something that'll help people. Something that isn't selfish, isn't cruel, isn't anything but good, although it seems all the other way. I didn't feel at all shocked at what you did to that Hemingway man. Maybe it's you I trust and believe in. But somehow I feel curiously light, as though I were treading on air, as though I were living for the first time. Life seems to be unrolling before me like a wonderful picture—and it was always so drab and ugly before. I can't tell just why it seems so changed, but maybe it's that I've stumbled out of being nobody suddenly. I'm somebody now. Just what, I don't know. But one of those who help to make the world a better place to live in. One of those who are steering the ship, instead of one of the thousands huddled up on the steerage deck, not knowing nor understanding where the ship's bound for, or why."

She stopped suddenly.

"I suppose this sounds all very conceited and silly to you, doesn't it? It doesn't sound in words like it feels. I suppose I'm wrong."

Norroy surveyed her again as he

lighted one of his interminable crested paper tubes—watched her as one well worth watching.

"No," he said, "it doesn't sound either silly or conceited, and you've expressed your feelings well enough. Your imagination's been touched, that's all. You've found the magic carpet; you're soaring aloft on it. And you're right. You *have* stumbled onto one of the biggest things of your day. And I believe you'll count in the world before it's over."

He asked her the address of the shop where the plates had been sold. She told him; repeated also bitterly the amount paid her for them.

"Two hundred dollars," he said, with whimsical protest to the heavens. "Two hundred dollars!"

He took out the roll of thousand-dollar bills he had taken from Crawe.

"And I know," he said, tapping them, "that it will take more than this to buy them back before the chase is over."

He felt something put into his hand—the six notes Crawe had given her. "More than these, too?" she asked, releasing her hold on them.

"Why do you give this up?" asked Norroy curiously, holding the notes in a slim gloved hand, staring from them to her.

"Because the only excuse for stealing that money is to use it to do some good with," she replied, in all earnestness. "You're broad-minded enough to admit it's stealing, aren't you?"

"Stealing from a thief, yes," was Norroy's answer. "And you object to stolen money, do you—even this kind?"

"Didn't I say why?" returned Holly. "It would make me no better than that horrible man if I kept it."

"And I?"

Norroy was smiling.

"I mayn't express myself well," said Holly, rather unhappily; "but I meant you *would* do good with it, which would excuse the theft."

"And how do you *know* I'll do good with it? How do you know I'm not really as bad as he is?"

"I told you before—that feeling of bigness, of something worth while. That would be enough. A woman's

never wrong about those feelings unless she's in love with the man, is she? And now, besides that, I'm beginning to understand."

"Understand what?" was his slow response.

"About the plates—what they are."

"Strong *did* write you, then? But no," he corrected himself hastily, ashamed of the words showing such lack of reasoning, "else you wouldn't have sold them for two hundred dollars—unless you've tried to get them back, and failed."

"Don't you believe in gratitude? You won mine for good and all when you said you'd give me my chance after I'd deceived you. If you suspect people of lying all the time, then there's no especial cleverness in your doubting me before. Don't disappoint me, Mr. Norroy."

Norroy eyed her in gratified surprise. She was capable of real thought, this bewitching bundle of childish charm. He no longer doubted her ability to help him in the long chase, the road of which was unwinding like a ribbon before him. What was better, he no longer doubted her sincerity.

"Forgive me," said Yorke Norroy, who, like all big men, never hesitated to apologize when in the wrong. "I do believe in you. I accept the right to call on you for help. Personally I trust you. But officially I have no right to share my information about the plates. You said you understood—or were beginning to. If you are right, I shall not deceive you. Tell me."

She nodded toward the chauffeur, whispering:

"Does *he* know?"

"No one in America—on my side of the battlefield—except myself and one other. A secret is always safer under one hat. Next to that, it's safer under two."

"And under a bonnet it isn't safe at all?"

"I, like you, seldom fail in my intuitions, little Holly. They make an exception in favor of your bonnet."

"How near are we to New York?"

He flashed the radium hands of his

watch upward; knowing the time they had started and the car's average speed, he made a little calculation.

"We'll wait, then," she said.

The car plunged forward into a gully filled with snow, necessitating the reversal of the motor. The snow was drifting high in their path. Both Norroy and Holly looked like polar explorers in their shaggy, snow-packed motor coats. Norroy viewed the road before him, and corrected his calculation.

"The store where I sold the plates will be closed by that time," she said. The lights of another small town came into view.

Norroy gave an order to the man driving.

"We'll stop off here and take the train to New York the remainder of the way," he said, glancing up from a railroad time-table which he had read with the assistance of the radium-handed watch. "I can't wait as long as the car will take to get there in such weather as this to reach the shop. When we reach town, we'll go directly to the shop. Meanwhile, my friend on the front seat will have taken your bag to a furnished apartment which will be made ready for you. And before that you'll have told me what you know of the plates."

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST OF THE OPIUM MAKERS.

The train from the South lingered at the little station just long enough for the breathless two to clamber aboard with the assistance of a porter. Norroy engaged a drawing-room, ordered a brandy and soda for himself, and hot chocolate for the girl. Then he pressed her for particulars.

"I've just done a little simple arithmetic," said Holly. "First, you said poor Captain Strong——"

Her eyes filmed with tears again, but she mastered the sob in her voice, and continued, striving for a businesslike tone:

"You said poor Captain Strong had

been ki-killed by some one hired by the same man who sent that Mr. Hemingway to me to-day. Then you said afterward that it was done to make money. That showed me that the plates weren't valuable because—well," she added apologetically, "I've read books, detective stories, you know, about the eyes of idols stolen from sacred temples, things that Chinese and East Indians and Persians and people worshiped. I thought it was that way. Those two things added together showed me the plates weren't—er—sacred or anything like that. See?"

"I understand," Norroy corrected gravely.

"I meant 'understand.'"

She flushed; then, to cover her confusion:

"What a pretty cigarette case! That looks sacred."

She smiled.

"Go on," directed Norroy, returning the case to his pocket, and twirling the slim cigarette between fingers comparatively as slender. The girl hid her own spotlessly clean but somewhat ill-kept hands at this close sight of his, and continued hurriedly:

"Then you said something like this: 'To make mischief to the world in general.' Still I didn't have any idea of what they were, although my head was all in a whirl. I thought of you—the kind of man I always thought of as so careful of his reputation, so very honorable about everything—you looked all that—knocking a man senseless from behind, stealing his money, and still I knew you were right—felt it. Then I thought of this other man letting twenty thousand dollars go so carelessly that it looked as if he'd pay more if even that wasn't enough. I was just wild with excitement and curiosity, and I thought, thought, thought until my head seemed to burst. Then you did another awfully dishonorable thing—you know what I mean, dishonorable if you judge the action just by the action itself—that lie you told in the police station that would keep that man in jail and maybe get him into the penitentiary——"

"Where he should be now by rights;

and if he were sentenced for all the things he's done, he'd stay there for the remainder of his life," interpolated Norroy, smoking furiously. It wasn't exactly pleasant to hear that sweet young mouth using the words "steal," "dishonorable," and "lie" with reference to him—Yorke Norroy.

"Didn't you hear his name—his real name? Lycurgus Crowe, the 'get-rich-quick' man. Specialty, getting the nickels, dimes, and quarters of foreign-born laborers who want to buy homes or invest money at as high interest as they can get, and who don't know how to read English well enough to realize that their contracts with Crowe gave him their money in exchange for nothing but promises," said Yorke Norroy smoothly, but with a flash of that merciless justice of his that was above ready-made moralities. "If his life was worth risking a seat in an electric chair, I'd take it as quickly as I'd take a rattler's! Lynch law has some merits. Didn't you hear the name? Lycurgus Crowe!"

"I'd never heard *his* name before," answered Holly, with apology and contrition. "And I wasn't criticizing what you did. I keep telling you I felt you were right. But the other name—Philip Hurrish. The cheap vaudeville theaters are full of dope fiends, Mr. Norroy—excuse the slang, but I don't know any other word. They 'sniff'—that is, use 'coke'—cocaine, you know. Some of them use the 'gun'—I mean the 'needle'—oh, they're all 'up against the white stuff'—"

Desperately she was about to make another attempted emendation when Norroy gave her the correct phrase:

"You mean they use morphine; some inject it, some eat it; I understand."

"Yes; and others use 'heroin'—is that the name? Others 'Birney's'—I'm not sure of that name, either—but all these things are manufactured by this man Philip Hurrish. And some of the 'fiends'—poor things!—how they curse him! So when you mentioned that terrible man's name I remembered the letters Captain Strong wrote me, and right away I understood. Here are some of the letters. I took them out of my bag

before we left the motor—that's what I kept you waiting for. There!"

She folded over a portion of one.

"That tells me Captain Strong has been ordered to take his troop to join General Somebody-or-the-other to go to that town where the opium manufacturing were. Then here's another. This was terribly interesting. I showed it to ever so many people. It says that until the early part of last century people who used opium either ate it in some form of pills or else took it under the name of laudanum. He tells me there to read 'The Confessions of an English Opium Eater.' He was always advising me to read good books, poor Captain Strong. Then he goes on to say that some great Chinese chemist found a way to take most of the harmful stuff out of opium—a secret process—he invented the pipe, too—he says it's a—what?" She handed the letter to Norroy, who read:

"Hung-Tshi-Ling discovered the method of extracting most of the harmful alkaloids from gum opium. The pipe is really a chemical retort . . . instead of being unpalatable and sickening to take, it became pleasant; the habit increased all over the world, until now there are as many white men using it as Chinese. But—"

Norroy paused. "And here is where Captain Strong sums up the situation exactly as it is, little Holly: /

"Nobody knew how to make Shandoo—as Hung-Tshi-Ling's secret-process opium was made—except the employees of the two factories. By command of the Chinese government, we are to burn those factories, destroy all the opium in the warehouses, and execute every man, woman, or child who knows the process—thank God, I have nothing to do with the latter part of it; that is the public executioner's job. The government figures that as no one else can make Shandoo, when all that has been exported is used up, the great majority of opium smokers, being unable to get anything but vile concoctions that sicken the stomach, will cease to use opium, and the curse of it will be lifted from the world."

Norroy returned the letter.

"Precisely, little Holly. And when Strong found those plates, quite by accident—for he was quartered in the yamen of the original Hung-Tshi-Ling

—he had no idea that he was about to nullify all the good that came out of those cruel executions. He sent them to you, thinking them curious antiques that you might use to decorate your room, didn't he?"

She nodded, tears in her eyes again.

"Then I was right?" she asked, feeling for her handkerchief.

"Right in everything," replied Norroy. "Right in your intuition as to my desire to save the world—and particularly this country, where there is more opium smoking now than anywhere on the globe—from China's century or so of stagnation and lethargy. Right in your syllogisms—or, say, synthetic deductions—concerning Hurrish. And right in believing that on those six plates is carved the only existing formula for making Hung-Tshi-Ling's opium—Shandoo. They're not in my hands now, those plates," he added, throwing away his cigarette, and grinding it into the carpet with his heel; "but they will be, little Holly; they will be."

"It's come at last," said the girl, nodding her head solemnly. "It's come at last!"

Norroy was roused out of his own plans by her almost religious tone.

"What?" he asked.

"My reason for existing, I guess," she said, turning off her mood with a gay little laugh. "I always wanted an excuse for that; always wanted to be worth while. You can have your old 'Devonshire Maid.' I'm going to act on a real stage at last. I'm going to help you. I'm going to live, breathe, eat, sleep with only one idea. The same as yours—to do some good. To be worth while. To find those plates—with you!"

Late that night Norroy addressed a letter to Hurrish. It was brief and to the point. It advised the millionaire to be more particular in his choice of tools and methods, and inclosed Norroy's personal check for twenty thousand dollars. Norroy had won the first round, and could afford to be generous. And, besides, Norroy was peculiar in one thing. In words, he frequently deprecated the homely virtues, like business honesty, but in action he always exemplified them in his own conduct.

The second story in this series will be published two weeks hence, in the first December POPULAR, on sale November 7th.



WORSE THAN BUYING A HORSE

MANY novelists, lavish with ink and ideas, have written about all there is to say concerning the ways of a maid with a man, but there never yet has arisen a genius capable of dressing off in proper style the ways of a man with a maid—especially if he contemplates making that maid his stenographer.

Below is a list of the directions received within an hour by the manager of a Boston firm which undertakes to furnish stenographers to anybody who wants them. The instructions and requirements came over the wire in all voices and keys, including bass, tenor, baritone, and bearish:

"I want a girl who likes to work."

"Send me a good-looking girl, for, if I don't have something pretty to look at, I can't work."

"Don't send me a good-looking girl because, if you do, I'll never do another lick of work."

"There's only one thing I've got to say: Don't send me a brunette."

"I make one condition: Don't send me any of those drug-store blondes. I don't believe in 'em."

"I won't have any fat girl. I'm fat myself, and I know the brand. Fat people are lazy."

The Heart of the Gallery

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "Garrity's Champion," "Oh, Genevieve!" Etc.

It has been said that "Nothing succeeds like success." Here is a boxer's story to prove that the apothegm isn't always true. It needed a failure in Dougherty's case to win success so far as the approbation of the gallery was concerned. Dougherty could box—but the gallery gods paid one dollar a head not to see him fight, but to see him licked.

VERY few young men waste any time or thought on the selection of a collar. The average youth may be a bit fussy about his neckties; but when it comes to collars, he buys them offhand, a dozen at a time; "about so high and size fifteen." Yet there was once a young man who claimed that the collars he wore in his high-school days influenced his choice of a career, and led to his becoming famous on two continents.

When the young women who wrote the "Sunday specials" for the magazine sections of the newspapers were sent to interview Robert Emmet Dougherty, they looked at his clean-cut profile, his well-shaped head, his clear gray Irish eyes, his neatly manicured hands, his seventy-dollar sack suits, and his up-to-the-minute haberdashery, and sooner or later the question was sure to come:

"Please, Mr. Dougherty, tell me how you ever came to be a—a—*pugilist*!"

"Suppose we say 'boxer,'" Robert Emmet would suggest gently; and then, with a mischievous twinkle in his gray eyes, he would lay all the blame on the high collars he wore in his teens.

"Perhaps you can remember," he would begin, with a rare burst of gallantry, considering the average age of the female reporter, "the days when the boys began to part their hair in the middle. The style of wearing the hair has

changed twice since then; but that was the time when the high, single-fold collar came in. I wanted to be in the social swim, and I wore the highest collars I could buy—the highest ones ever seen south of Market Street. There are a lot of Irish boys in that neighborhood—I'm Irish myself, ma'am, in case you haven't noticed it—and some of them didn't like the collars I wore. They called me a dude. I had to show them I wasn't one, and there was only one way to do *that*, all the parties concerned being Irish. I used to average about five fights a week, all on account of the collars."

"How extraordinary!" the lady journalists would exclaim.

"Wasn't it? 'Here comes the dude!' they'd say; and then I'd take off my high collar so as not to soil it—one of them had to last me all day, you know—and we'd go at it hammer and tongs."

"And—you won?" the newspaper ladies would ask.

"No, ma'am, not at first. You see, in those days I didn't know anything about scientific boxing. I thought all there was to a fight was to hit the other fellow first and hardest. Some of them were bigger and stronger than I was, and they used to lick me. They did it often enough to thump some notion of cleverness into my head. Boxing, you know, isn't a matter of brute strength. It's a

question of brains, of guessing what the other fellow is going to try to do, and then knowing how to stop him. There's an antidote for every punch, ma'am; and when I got that into my head and found out what my left hand had been given me for, I began to win. The Irish in me made me go down the line and reverse all the decisions that were out against me—lick the fellows that had licked me—and that's how I got started. You can see for yourself that the collars did it. I never would have gone into the fighting game for love of it."

At this point the sympathetic lady reporters would murmur: "Cer-tainly *not!*" and scribble furiously, while Robert Emmet guided the interview deftly along other lines. It pleased him to decry "shop talk"; and he was fond of discussing literature and the drama with those who had been sent to him with instructions to make him talk fight. Shakespeare and the musical glasses, cabbages or kings—it was all one to Robert Emmet Dougherty. He was one fighter who did not throw away his morning paper after glancing at the sporting page. One, and probably the only one.

Usually the feminine journalists went away and wrote pieces heavily shot with vain regret for that such a brilliant youth should have selected a career of fists; and Robert Emmet, chuckling over their articles, experienced the sensation the prestidigitator feels when the suspicious gentleman in the audience reaches into the proffered pack of cards, and selects the very one which had been planted for him from the beginning.

To tell the truth, these interviews, picturing Robert Emmet as the bored young man about town, the critic of art in general, and the last word in sartorial elegance, did Robert no good with his real public, and a fighter's public is made up of the gentlemen who pay their money at the gate. Some of them are educated and refined, thin-skulled and soft-handed, but the large and vociferous majority are thick in the neck and low in the brow. The latter class bitterly resented Mr. Dougherty's occa-

sional appearances in the rôle of an æsthete, and spelled out the best passages of the reporting sisters with supreme scorn and disgust.

"Here," said the low-browed ones, "here is a guy what's getting too big for his pants; see? The gall o' him, kickin' in wit' a line o' talk like this! Listen here." (Quotation marks and suitable profanity.)

To tell the plain truth, Robert Emmet had never been a popular idol in his own town. There is one place where every fighter should be "strong," and that is in the town which gave him to fame. Many a good town has been proud of a poor fighter, supporting him loyally through thick and thin; but Robert Emmet, though one of the best lightweights in the world, and living in the sporting Mecca of America, found his public divided. From his beginnings as an amateur, the men in the box seats—the clubmen and the gay young blades of the society set—had been with him; the gallery gods paid one dollar a head, not to see him fight, but to see him licked.

Nobody has ever been able to explain why the average man, seeking a Queensbury idol, turns always to the knocker-out—the man with the punch. Take the history of the ring in America, and the first names which come to mind are not the names of boxers, not the names of the clever evaders of punishment, but those who could give it—the one-punch winners—Sullivan and Fitzsimmons and Dempsey.

You may argue until you are black in the face along the line that scientific boxing makes a better spectacle than a slugging match; but the cleverest exhibition ever staged will never bring the gallery up with a bellow or cause the ringside habitué to put the wrong end of his cigar in his mouth.

What the average man wants to see is the smashing blow which ends the fight—the knock-out punch; and perhaps the thing which set the gallery gods against Dougherty was the fact that he did not seem to have one. The dollar customers will overlook much in the man whose opponents are carried out of the

ring; but the man who must win on points alone has a harder row to hoe.

The gallery gods had been waiting for several years to see Robert Emmet defeated. Some of them were present when he made his first public appearance as an amateur; and when, three nights later, he emerged a champion in his class, the disgust of the Minna Street delegation was intense.

"Nothing to him but that powder-puff left hand," they said. "All he can do is to ram that into your stomach and clinch. He can't hit hard enough with his right to break a lamp chimney; and, if he wasn't so fast on his feet, any dub could corner him and stop him with a punch."

They were still waiting at the end of three years, when Robert Emmet announced his professional debut, whereat there was great joy south of Market Street. Robert's opponent was a dangerous lightweight, who carried a terrific punch in either hand; and on the night of the battle the galleries were jammed with hopeful young gentlemen from Jessie Street and Minna Street and Tehema Street, who hooted Robert's sleek poll as it bobbed down the aisle in the midst of a swirl of reserved-seat enthusiasm.

"Here's where the four-flusher gets his block knocked off!" said the McCartys and the Rileys and the Dugans. "He won't dance *this* guy to death; believe me!"

To the great disappointment of those who peered down through the haze of cigar smoke and the joy of the young men about town who made that smoke, Robert Emmet cleanly outpointed his dangerous opponent, using his left hand with telling effect, and slipping away from the sledge-hammer returns, unscathed and smiling. At the end there was nothing left for the referee but to hoist Dougherty's right glove; while the folks from south of the slot hissed and booed and howled maledictions.

"I was too clever for him," said Robert Emmet modestly, when questioned by the newspaper men. "He couldn't have hit me with a handful of bird-shot."

Dougherty's rise to fame was on the skyrocket order. Aided by one of the cleverest matchmakers that ever planned a campaign, Robert Emmet picked his way cautiously into the lightweight division, and the gallery waited, sneering. The young men with whom he had fought in livery stables and back alleys scoffed at the full-page stories in the newspapers. They were the charter members of the "I-Knew-Him-When Club," and their hammers came out whenever Dougherty's name was mentioned. There was almost a riot on Natoma Street when one Sunday paper devoted four columns to a description of Robert Emmet's wardrobe.

"When I knew him, he didn't have only one suit of clothes," said Jimmy Dugan, whom Dougherty had once jabbed into submission in a vacant lot off Howard Street. "They're talking about him being a champion some day, too! A champion has got to have something more than a slap on the wrist and a drag with the newspapers! All this guy can do is to play tag with you for twenty rounds, and he just two-steps all these fellows to death, and they wear themselves out chasing him. Another thing; no man ever got to be a champion without being *game*; and has Dougherty ever showed any gameness? It's a two-ace bet that the first time somebody gets to his jaw good and hard, he'll curl up like a wet postage stamp! Him a coming champion! They give me a pain with that stuff!"

Meantime Robert Emmet cruised along a carefully planned course, winning decisions over thoughtfully selected lightweights with monotonous regularity, seldom scoring a knock-down, and seeing to it that nobody scored one on him, emerging from each battle without a mark upon his features.

"A tin ear," he once remarked to the representatives of a free and enlightened press, "is the badge of incompetence. A broken nose is a confession of inefficiency. No clever man was ever disfigured in the ring; and it is as creditable to avoid punishment as it is to administer it. Why should I allow

one of these clumsy, awkward fighters to mark me for life just to show those wheelbarrow Irish up in the gallery that I can take a punch once in a while?"

Such sayings as these, carefully reported in the public prints, did not increase Robert Emmet's popularity with the masses. Old Tim Slattery, the venerable sportsman from Hayes Valley, spoke for the town when he said:

"The boy's head is swelled so bad that nothing but an unmerciful wallop will take it out of him. Pride goeth before a fall, and a swelled head before destruction. Far be it from me to wish the lad ill, and his folks all friends of mine, but—*may I be there when he gets it!*"

Robert Emmet was a very valuable piece of fighting machinery from a manager's standpoint, as any fighter must be in a city where the twenty-dollar patrons flock through the turnstiles to see him win and the gallery gods stand in line for hours to see him lose. Such a man comes close to being the ideal drawing card.

Dougherty had a good head for business; and Joe Kenneson, his manager, had a better one. Robert demanded and received bonuses, and his bank account grew like a magical mango tree, well into five figures and stretching toward six. Thus was one of Robert Emmet's ambitions satisfied; but another remained. He wanted to write "light-weight champion of the world" after his name and retire undefeated.

Now, the holder of the title, Johnny Hicks, was also blessed with an alert manager named Benny Franks. He was much too wise a bird to pit his protégé against a clever boxer in a limited-round contest where a referee's decision might carry with it the light-weight crown, as the sporting writers are fond of calling it. Benny Franks was a shrewd, calculating young man, who never bought pigs in pokes or cats in bags. When Benny made a bargain, the bag had to be turned inside out for him and every seam examined.

"What is there in it for us?" was his constant question.

Johnny Hicks, the lightweight cham-

pion, was as tough a bit of human furniture as ever trundled through the ropes; but outside of his ring performances he left much to be desired. Johnny did not feed epigrams to the newspaper men, nor did he discuss music and the drama. He stuck to the only subject he knew anything about; and there wasn't a "th" in his whole vocabulary; but he was a thunderbolt in action, and his right cross atoned for a multitude of Queensbury errors. Johnny couldn't box, and his defense was wide open as a barn door; but he could take forty punches to give one in return; and, when that one went true to the mark, it was time to turn out the lights and start for the street.

Robert Emmet had felt the champion-ship bee buzzing about his ears ever since he had seen Hicks defeat Kid Smead in nine rounds. He had made a study of Hicks' awkward, whirlwind style of battle, carefully noting all his defeats, arriving at the conclusion that he could outpoint the champion as easily as he had outpointed all the others.

"Go get that fellow for me," said Robert Emmet to his manager.

"Think you can lick him, Bobby?" asked the manager. "Remember, he's got an awful kick in that right mitt, and he's as strong as a bull. One rap on the jaw, and 'day-day' for us."

"If that clumsy stiff ever hits *me* on the jaw," said Robert Emmet, who had human lapses into the vernacular of his calling, "it'll be when I'm asleep. I can make him look like a monkey, Joe. Go get him."

Now it was one thing to say "Go get him," and it was another thing to do it; but Joe Kenneson's first move was to launch a campaign of publicity. Opening with a formal challenge and the posting of a certified check, Kenneson began firing broadsides into the champion's camp.

"Let 'em put up their money if they ain't afraid to fight us!" was his slogan. Two weeks of this sort of thing brought about a conference between the managers—not the sort of a conference which is flash-lighted and reported by columns.

"Say, lay off of us," complained Benny Franks. "We don't want to fight for a while, anyway. Johnny has got some theatrical dates to fill in the East, and we won't be ready until winter. You're spoiling for a battle, and now I'll tell you what we'll do. You take on this McCafferty fellow, and if you trim him, we'll fight you here next November. How's that?"

"Rotten!" said Kenneson. "McCafferty, eh? What would we want to fight *him* for? Who did he ever lick?"

"A many of 'em, believe me!" said Franks. "You've been picking soft ones for this boy of yours. Now here's a real fight for you; and if you win it, you get a crack at the title."

"Nothing doing!" said Kenneson.

"All right," said Franks. "Johnny is the champ, and he's going to do some dictating, the same as the rest of 'em have always done. If you don't want McCafferty, we'll fight him next winter ourselves, and your angel-faced kid will have whiskers down to his knees before we give him a chance. Do you get me?"

In this fashion champions sometimes eliminate dangerous customers. McCafferty was a rough-and-tumble battler of the Hicks type, who had literally mauled his way into the top flight of the lightweight division, where he was looming up as a dangerous contender. Dougherty was also a legitimate challenger; and as between the two men, Franks preferred to eliminate the Californian. McCafferty was a tough proposition; but Benny believed his man to be a tougher one, and able to outgame any rushing, tearing fighter of his weight in the world. Robert Emmet, at twenty or twenty-five rounds, with a referee's decision at the end, was distinctly a horse of a questionable color. Now, if McCafferty could be used to sidetrack the California special, so much the better.

"Take it or leave it," said Benny Franks amiably. "We've made you an offer. Let your man go and get him a reputation that will put him in line for a fight with the champion. Lick one real fighter and you're on."

Joe Kenneson argued and raved. Franks had said his last word. A few weeks later, the McCafferty match was made, and Robert Emmet went into training. He would have fought any four lightweights in the business for a chance at the title.

Once more the city on the sand hills blazed with fight excitement. McCafferty was the boy, said Minna Street, to take the stuck-up Dougherty down a peg or two; McCafferty was the boy with the mighty wallop. Word that the winner was to be matched with Hicks for the championship added to the interest. South of the slot the residents were betting upon McCafferty; on the other side of Market Street Robert Emmet ruled the favorite in public esteem.

When the great night arrived, Benny Franks sat at the end of a telegraph wire in a New York newspaper office and followed the battle punch by punch as it came clicking from the operator's typewriter. Benny had been prophesying an early defeat for Dougherty; but with the detailed description of the fifteenth round before him, his cigar went out, and new wrinkles showed between his eyebrows.

"The native son has got him on points," said the operator as he jerked the sixteenth sheet from the machine and tossed it upon the table.

"Wait!" said Benny grimly. "This McCafferty is a hard finisher."

"He'll *have* to be!" said the operator cheerfully. "None of 'em have finished this boy yet." A few moments later, while he was busy with the running story of the eighteenth round, the man flung up one hand sharply.

"Flash!" he said. "Here comes the winner!"

Reporters, copy boys, sporting writers, and the few invited guests maintained a breathless silence as the sounder chattered insanely. The operator looked up with a grin.

"Dougherty wins," he said quietly. "Gets the decision on points."

The listeners drew long breaths, and a murmur ran through the group.

Benny Franks flung out an oath. "You have to kill one of those native

sons in the ring before you can get as good as a draw!" he growled. "Well, that puts it up to us!"

Three thousand miles away a shock-headed young man was scowling in one corner of the ring while his seconds tore at his gloves. In another corner was Robert Emmet Dougherty, a bit red about the ribs, but serene and smiling down on the mob which surged below him. His twenty-dollar friends were cheering him; but the dominating note came from the galleries—a heavy, rumbling roar of protest, pierced here and there by catcalls and shrill howls of derision.

"Draw! Draw! Draw!" they shouted hoarsely. "McCafferty! McCafferty!"

The referee, a short, fat man, with a round, red face, paused halfway between the ropes and looked up through the smoke. The howls grew louder.

"Listen to that!" said the referee to the newspaper men. "Hollering for their little piker bets. I leave it to you boys if I could have done anything else. Dougherty had, at least, seventeen rounds on points; and what good is aggressiveness if it gets you nothing?"

The referee's decision was absolutely fair, yet, when Robert Emmet hopped through the ropes and started for the dressing room, the gallery gods, leaning out over the railings, hooted and hurled insults after him. Later, the hoots changed suddenly to ringing cheers. Dougherty glanced back over his shoulder. The loser, still scowling, was leaving the ring.

"Can you beat that?" said Robert Emmet bitterly. "I'll make 'em sing another song when I'm the champion; eh, Joe?"

"You betcher life!" said Kenneson. "And we'll beat him just as easy as we beat this roughneck to-night."

"He won't lay a set hand on me," said Robert Emmet.

Half an hour later, as the victor was being rushed to a waiting automobile through a crowd of sporting Lazaruses, eager for any crumb from the pugilistic table, the hoots and jeers rose again,

and followed Robert Emmet far down the street.

"They love me, don't they?" said Dougherty irritably. "A bunch of dirty hoodlums!"

"Don't you care, kid," said Kenneson. "You've got their money, and, what's more, you'll have it when they're in the bread line. What's better than that; eh?"

"Money isn't everything," said the victor sentimentally. "Joe, I'll never be satisfied until I make those lowbrows get up on their hind legs and cheer me like they cheered McCafferty to-night. I'll *make* 'em do it, I tell you! They call me a dude boxer, and they say I'm not game, but I'll show 'em! Wait till I get Hicks in the ring!"

II.

Robert Emmet, clad only in lilac-silk pajamas and bath slippers, sat on the edge of his bed with his fingers locked over one knee. The clean, trim, fighting lines of his perfect body showed through the clinging fabric. If his face seemed a bit thin, his eyes were bright and clear and electric with vitality. His every appearance was that of the human animal on edge for a supreme trial of strength and endurance, every surplus ounce stripped away, and nothing left but hardened fighting material.

Joe Kenneson sprawled opposite him in a big chair. The manager was in his shirt sleeves, and at intervals of thirty seconds he rolled an unlighted cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"Only twenty-four hours more!" he said, with a sigh. "Gee, I wish it was to-night!"

"So do I," said Robert Emmet. "It's the last few days that get to a fellow, Joe."

"Nervous?"

Robert Emmet stood up and stretched himself.

"No," said he truthfully. "Only anxious to have it over. I want to see what this fellow will do when he finds out I've got a right hand."

"That's all right," said Kenneson;

"but don't go getting gay with Hicks just because you've been knocking down a lot of these bums around the training quarters. You've developed a nice, snappy, right-hand wallop; but don't forget that Hicks has fought every hard hitter in the country but McCafferty; and they've all hit him on the jaw, but it didn't get 'em anything. A mixing fight is what he likes. You must box him, Bobby. Don't let him start roughing it. That would be playing right into his mitt."

"Leave it to me!" said the challenger. "Did I ever make a mistake in sizing up a fight beforehand?"

"No-o," assented Kenneson.

"Well, I won't make any this time," said Dougherty. "He might just as well stick that right hand in a sling for all the good it will do him. Now get out of here. I'm going to sleep!"

The manager went away with a serious face. On the porch of the training quarters he found Alvie Kling, a wise young man whose advice was always worth hearing.

"Alvie," said Kenneson, "I'm worried about the boy. You know his right hand has never amounted to much, simply because he never used it. He hurt it when he was boxing amateurs, and he's always been a little bit leary of it ever since. The last few weeks he's been trying it out, and he's dropped several of these fellows with it—sparring partners and volunteers. He's got the idea into his head that he can hurt Hicks with his right—catch him by surprise and slam it over on him. Bob's got some crazy notion about what he calls the psychological effect of a good right-hand jaw punch delivered by a man who's not supposed to have any right hand at all. It's too deep for me; but I'm afraid that psychology thing will get him in trouble."

"Listen, bo," said Alvie. "It's all right for Dougherty to bull those newspaper people with long words and high-brow stuff, but all the psychological effect in the world, backed up by the kick of a mule, ain't going to get Hicks—not on the jaw, at any rate. You know Slater. He only weighs one hundred

and thirty-five, but he can hit as hard as any middleweight living. Well, Slater bounced that right hand off Hicks' jaw forty times in the first five rounds and never dropped him once. Hicks wobbled some, but he came right back; and, if Slater couldn't turn the trick, Dougherty might just as well tuck his fancy little right hand into the discard before he starts. Take it from me, Joe, you've got only one chance to win, and that is to box this fellow from start to finish—and box him mighty cagy at that. The minute Robert starts trading the rough stuff with Hicks, he's flirting with sudden death. Get me?"

"Just my idea exactly," said the worried manager. "I say, 'Box your regular style—the left hand and the clinch.' But Bobby is awful stubborn sometimes, and he thinks he knows it all. This is one fight that he shouldn't take any chance with."

"If he does, you'll have to wave the smelling salts under his nose," said the wise Mr. Kling. "I think I'll have a talk with the boy. I've got a couple of hundred bet on him at nice, fat odds, and I guess I'll have to put the bee on that psychology stuff. 'Stick to the ship that carried you over!' That's *my* psychology. Bob has won all his fights with his left hand and without taking a chance. His left hand is good enough to win a championship—if he only thinks so. Yes, I guess it's up to me to talk to that young fool like a Dutch uncle. What?"

"I wish you would," said Kenneson; "only don't let him know I said anything. He's touchy when I talk boxing to him. He thinks he ought to know better than me."

Once again the south-of-the-slot delegation moved full strength upon the ticket windows of the old pavilion which had housed so much of Queensbury history. In the early dusk of the November evening, the odd little, two-piece cable cars slid clanging through a mob which packed Larkin Street from curb to curb, defying police regulations and the occasional automobile.

From the gallery ticket windows long

lines extended up the side streets, hugging the dark walls of the immense building, and along these lines frantic young men were scurrying, vainly endeavoring to "buy in," and thus secure a front seat. Offers of two, three, and even four dollars were scornfully refused, for this was the big night, the night for which they had waited five years, the night when the dude with the powder-puff left hand was to meet his Waterloo. Minna Street and Brannan Street and Clementina Street held the line unbroken against the bidders, for what was mere money to the great sporting treat of the decade, the one fight which no follower of the game could afford to miss?

Bronzed infantrymen from the Presidio, artillerymen from the fort, sailors and marines from the Mare Island Navy Yard mingled with the sharp-nosed, square-chinned young men of the Mission and Hayes Valley. Clerks and salesmen in neat overcoats and kid gloves, cab drivers in high hats and heavy ulsters, teamsters in their Sunday regalia, waiters enjoying a night off, laboring men, loafers, and worse, met on common ground.

Arguments rippled along the lines or swelled among those unfortunates who, balked by financial stringency, were forced to content themselves with the free show out of doors. Each man defended his own belief loudly, and with scant regard for the convictions of his neighbor. Here and there a Dougherty man boldly championed the cause of the native son; but the great heart of the crowd was with the alien Hicks—the knock-out, the slam-bang fighter.

"A-a-ah, Hicks'll knock him out of the ring in three——"

"I tell you, he don't *need* to know nothin' about boxin'; that guy is a *fighter*!"

"Even so, the rest of these sluggers didn't stop him, and——"

"Bet you anything from a punch in the nose to a million dollars——"

"Cheese it! Here comes a cop!"

When at last the gallery doors opened, the empty building resounded to the flying feet on the stairs racing for

the choice positions; and each man who was fortunate enough to secure a front seat, immediately removed his coat, set fire to a long cigar, and settled down comfortably to watch the belated ones struggle for points of vantage. The crowd poured in until every square foot of floor space bore its burden; even the immense rafters were blackened with clinging humanity, swarming like bees under the roof. When the police ordered the gallery doors closed, thousands were still clamoring in the streets or making futile attacks upon the main ticket office, only to be turned back by patient young men, who repeated over and over:

"All gone. No reserved seats left. Sold out."

Later the sporting aristocrats began to trickle through the turnstiles; by eight o'clock the trickle had swelled into a steady tide. Only a few vacant patches appeared upon the lower floor. These were the ringside boxes, inhabited by politicians, professional men, and those to whom a twenty-dollar gold piece was of small consequence. Truly, it was a big night.

At nine-forty-five, the last pair of preliminary men left the ring, and, with the supernumeraries out of the way, the real actors of the evening began to arrive. A fat old gentleman, with a patriarchal white mustache, hoisted himself slowly into the ring and requested, in the name of the management, that the patrons would "kindly refrain from smoking." The patrons roared and lit fresh cigars.

At ten o'clock, on the dot, Robert Emmet Dougherty, surrounded by a phalanx of faithful retainers, made his way down the aisle and hopped into the ring. The box holders gave him a mighty reception, but the galleries were silent save for sporadic outbursts and catcalls.

Ten minutes later, the very rafters quivered to the reception accorded the lightweight champion; and Robert Emmet's lip curled as he listened to the full-throated roar from the roof.

"It ain't that they're so stuck on *him*," he said to Kenneson, "as that

they've got it in for me on general principles. This is the night that I make 'em take off their hats to the new champ. What?"

"Right!" said Kenneson.

The champion sprang into the ring and trotted over to Dougherty's corner. It was the first time the men had met, but in such cases introductions are not necessary.

"Hello, kid!" said the champion cordially, taking Robert Emmet's hand.

"Hello yourself and see how you like it!" said Robert Emmet. That was all, though the ringside operators were sending messages like this:

Hicks enters ring, 10:10, great demonstration. Men shake hands. Hicks says: "May the best man win." Both smile. Hicks to his corner.

The champion was not pretty to look at. His left ear stood out from his head, and his nose was flat and lop-sided. His hair seemed never to have known a comb intimately, and his upper lip was badly scarred. His small eyes twinkled cheerfully as they roved over the house; and he wondered what sixty per cent of the fighter's end would make in round figures. He had not been shaved for three days, and chin and jaw were sprinkled with tiny spines, very useful in a clinch and irritating to the other man's neck and shoulders. When he dropped his bath robe to be introduced by the fat gentleman with the patriarchal mustache, it was seen that he wore faded green trunks, with a discolored flag twisted through the belt loops. There was nothing fancy about Johnny Hicks. He looked as tough and as hard as a mahogany knot, and just about as handsome.

Robert Emmet came forth smiling, clean-shaven, barbered within an inch of his life, his cream-colored trunks bearing the emblem of a fashionable athletic club. The lower floor did its best, but the cheering fell far short as compared with the bellow of the gallery which descended upon the champion. It was class against mass, a fighter against a boxer, blind, human instinct against sentiment.

6B

"Let 'er go-o-o!"

Robert Emmet walked out of his corner with Kenneson's last injunction ringing in his ears:

"Take it easy, now; just feel him out. Box him; that's the stuff."

"No hurry, Johnny. You've got all night," Benny Franks had said. "Take your time."

Then, as strange dogs circle each other upon meeting in an alley, the champion and the challenger began the feeling-out process. Robert Emmet, with his superior skill and speed, was a master at this game. He advanced, retreated, circled about, shot futile jabs into the air, only to stop them halfway and skip nimbly out of range. Toward the end of the round he succeeded in tantalizing Hicks into a rush and a right swing. Robert Emmet's left shoulder came up over his ear, the whizzing glove glanced over the top of his head, and then, so fast that the eye could hardly follow, the famous left rip caught the champion in the pit of the stomach.

Hicks laughed, and the lower floor cheered wildly. Just before the bell rang, Robert Emmet shot three left jabs between the nose and the chin, and walked back to his corner perfectly satisfied with himself.

"He's the softest thing I ever saw," said Dougherty to his manager. "Telegraphs that right hand every time. I'll make a monkey of him."

This he proceeded to do for four rounds. Hicks warmed up in the second and began rushing; but Dougherty was too clever for him. The terrible right was always a fraction of a second late, and in the clinches the champion found himself blanketed by elbows and forearms, with never a chance to shoot his vicious, short uppercut through to the chin. Times without number Robert Emmet tilted the champion's head back with jabs which seemed to come from nowhere. It was a right-handed fighter against a left-handed one, with all the science on one side; and Alvie Kling, squatting behind newspaper row, noted with satisfaction that his warning was being heeded. Never once had

Dougherty tried to land a heavy blow with his right.

In vain the gallery thundered advice and begged the champion to "eat him alive." Hicks did his best. He rushed his man about the ring, wasting knock-out punches on the smoke-laden air. He struggled desperately in the clinches to free his arms and drive home the short, rasping jolts which had taken the stamina out of many a boxer; but Robert Emmet would do no work at close range nor allow the champion to do any, while at the long-range boxing, the native son scored at will, and evaded the plunging returns with ridiculous ease.

Six, seven, eight rounds, and still the same story—jab, clinch; jab, clinch. Brawn on one side; brain on the other; and brain was winning—on points, though it was not the sort of a winning fight to please Brannan Street, purple-faced and apoplectic in the gallery.

"You've got him a mile," said Kenne-son at the end of the eighth round. "Just keep it up and there'll be nothing to it. He couldn't hit you with a buggy whip."

"Stand up and fight!" roared the gallery. "Stand up and fight!"

"Keep tearing into him!" urged Benny Franks in the champion's corner. "You've got to wear him out and beat him down. He'll never take a chance. At him, tiger!"

"He runs like a rabbit!" grunted the disgusted Hicks. "No wonder he ain't ever been knocked out! He's a foot racer. He ain't a fighter! It would take a motor-cycle cop to catch him!"

"Never let it be said that a one-armed man outpointed you," said Benny Franks. "Sic him, you bulldog!"

The ninth round opened with a jab and a clinch, and Hicks snarled in Robert Emmet's ear:

"I'll get you, you yellow dog! Fight, if you ain't afraid! Fight!"

But Robert Emmet was an old bird. He had heard that sort of talk before. Mere conversation could never cause him to lose his temper. He repaid Hicks in kind.

"You're the champion, eh? How did you ever come to lick a good man?"

Hicks swore viciously, and Robert Emmet, his head on the champion's shoulder, heard the referee's call to break. At the same instant he caught a glimpse of Alvie Kling squatting at the ringside. Alvie was grinning broadly. There flashed into Robert Emmet's head a sentence he had heard that morning:

"Forget that right hand, kid. You never had one in your life, and you haven't got one now."

Why not make Kling admit that he had been wrong? Why not show the roughnecks in the galleries that Hicks didn't have the only right hand in the world? What was it that Hicks had called him? A one-armed Marathon runner! A solid, right-hand wallop might make the champion change his mind; and then there was the question of the psychological effect——

"All right, Eddie!" said Robert Emmet to the referee as a hand slapped his shoulder. "I'm trying to break all the time!"

Robert Emmet, shoulders hunched high to protect his jaw, drew cautiously out of the clinch and feinted rapidly with his left. Hicks, his guard rather low, waited for him to lead, snarling like an angry dog. Robert Emmet stepped forward, and the scythelike left crashed into the champion's midsection. Down went his guard, and quick as a flash of light over came Robert Emmet's unexpected right, one hundred and thirty-three pounds of fighting weight behind it. It was the last thing Johnny Hicks expected; the last thing for which he was prepared. He saw the blow coming; and the very unexpectedness of it caused him to open his mouth slightly in amazement. The hardest blow of Robert Emmet's career caught the champion full on the point of that loosened jaw, and knocked him sprawling to the canvas.

Thus was demonstrated the correctness of the theory that the psychological effect of the unforeseen is powerful in itself. One thing only Robert Emmet had overlooked, and that was its effect upon himself.

There was Johnny Hicks, lightweight

champion of the world, the man with the whalebone jaw, upon his back on the floor of the ring, ludicrous amazement showing on his battered face. Robert Emmet, crouched, with both hands poised, stared at the champion, and realized that he had knocked him there with his right hand. *With his right hand!* People had always said he hadn't one, yet there was Hicks on the floor. Slater hadn't been able to put him there; but he, Robert Emmet Dougherty, the boxer, had accomplished the feat, and with his right hand! Had that knock-out punch been there all the time?

Before the men in the box seats could scramble up with a yell, before the astounded gallery could find its tongue, Hicks was up again, shaking his head from side to side and attacking like a demon. Ah, that was the time for the cool head; that was the time for ring generalship; that was the time for caution; but Robert Emmet, master of all these things, rushed to meet the shaken champion, flailing away at him like a green preliminary fighter, while the great crowd went mad at the sight of a boxer suddenly turned fighter!

"Box him, you fool! Box him!" shrielled Alvie Kling from the ringside.

"Don't lost your head!" screamed Kenneson. "Cover up! Stall! Stall!"

"Knock his head off, Bobby!" roared the boxes.

"Kill him! Kill him, Hicksey!" howled the gallery. "Now's your chance! Kill him!"

Robert Emmet heard none of these things. One idea had driven all others from his head. He knew that he had floored the lightweight champion of the world with that despised right hand of his—the right hand which he himself had underrated for five years—and he knew that he could do it again. He stood toe to toe with Hicks in the middle of the ring, playing the savage game of give and take; smashing away with both hands—left, right! left, right! as fast as his gloves could fly. Gone was his cleverness, his left jab, his footwork, his instinct of self-preservation—everything gone but the one mad idea

which possessed him. He had put this man flat on his back with his right hand, and he was going to do it again. The next time Hicks went down he would *stay*. Now was his chance to make those muckers in the gallery take off their hats to him!

Robert Emmet Dougherty staggered out of his chair and stood erect. His head was whirling dizzily, and his legs trembled. He had a confused recollection that some one had shaken his hand and slapped him on the shoulder; but what it was all about he could not remember. Gradually he became conscious of a tremendous booming sound from the gallery. He looked up toward the rafters, and the cheers doubled in volume:

"Dougherty! Dougherty! Dougherty!"

Robert Emmet recognized Joe Kenneson at his elbow.

"What did I tell you, Joe?" he whispered thickly. "Didn't I say I'd make 'em take their hats off to me? What did I get him with? The right hand, wasn't it?"

"Good Lord!" said Joe under his breath, looking at the newspaper men, who were standing about the corner like mourners at a funeral. "He doesn't remember! He's out yet! Out on his feet!"

Alvie Kling flung himself into the group.

"You fathead!" he shouted. "You fathead! You tossed it off! You had it won, and you tossed it off!"

"Tossed it off!" stammered Robert Emmet, looking about him with dazed eyes. "Why—I *won*, didn't I?"

Joe Kenneson thrust Alvie aside with an oath.

"No, Bobby," said the manager, "you gave him an awful battle, but you didn't win. He got you in the twelfth round. You've been out for five minutes, and—why, boy, don't you *remember*?"

Robert Emmet tottered backward and dropped into his chair, covering his face with his hands. From the gallery still came the thousand-voiced bellow:

"Dougherty! Oh, you Dougherty!"

In the dressing room they told him what had happened. Told him how for four rounds he had fought like a tiger under frightful punishment, taking his knockdowns and repaying them with interest. Told him how he had reeled to his corner dazed and gasping at the end of each round, paying no attention to the frenzied advice poured into his ears. Told him how he had floored the champion three times in the twelfth round, and finally put him down for nine seconds; and how that respite had given Johnny Hicks a chance to pull himself together sufficiently to administer the last punch of the fight—a blind, right-hand swing under the chin which turned defeat into victory, and eliminated the Californian when he seemed on the point of winning.

"I don't remember! I don't remember!" wailed Robert Emmet. "What made me take a chance when I had him licked? Was I crazy, Joe?"

Joe Kenneson shook his head sadly. He knew all about matchmaking, and he could figure compound interest; but he was not posted on psychological problems.

Half an hour later a much bruised young man, muffled in a heavy overcoat, was hustled out of the building by several solemn friends. An immense crowd packed the narrow street in front of the main entrance, silent, waiting. There were few silk-lined overcoats in that crowd, for Robert Emmet's box-

seat patrons were scattered all over the city, mourning a fallen idol. It was the gallery which waited silently under the electric lights.

As Robert Emmet's battered face appeared for an instant in the doorway, one voice split the quiet in a wild yell: "Here he is, boys! Now!"

Then came the cheers, one crashing above the other like surf after a storm at sea, cheers such as a man hears but once in a lifetime and never forgets. Brannan Street and Clementina Street and Minna Street might make mistakes; but they also knew how to make noble amends. The dude boxer had shown them that he was a fighter, after all; they would show him that they knew a game man when they saw one.

The big automobile moved slowly through the crowd and rolled out on Market Street, pursued by a mighty chorus. Robert Emmet passed his sleeve across his eyes.

"Well," he said at last, and there was a crooked smile on his swollen lips, "I've got the gallery with me at last, Joe. I said I'd make them take their hats off to me to-night; but I thought they'd be taking off their hats to the winner! Did they just want to see me licked, or what?"

Which proves that Robert Emmet Dougherty, for all his cleverness, was as far from understanding the great heart of the gallery as in times past it had been from understanding him.

In the first December POPULAR you will get another story of the prize ring. It is called "Tony." On the stands in two weeks, November 7th.



A LOT OF MONEY WELL SPENT

ARTHUR BLANCHARD, who spends much of his time traveling over the country for the government, was seated behind a bride and groom in a Pullman car one afternoon when the train went through a long tunnel. As it emerged into the light of day the bride was grabbing desperately at her hat and fighting three fast rounds with one or two hairpins which had become loosened.

In order to relieve the situation and inject some harmless conversation into the gap, Blanchard remarked:

"This tunnel cost twelve million dollars."

"Well," said the bride judicially, "it was worth it."

Hero by Proxy

By John S. Lewis

It is time we quit talking about "the brave days of old." There are brave days right now and plenty of opportunity for brave men. Out of the thick of the fighting in Mexico comes this story of Sherry, the newspaper correspondent, foraging for pictures and stories, and suddenly finding himself in the secret service of the insurrecto government and elected savior of the cause. A hero's task for a commonplace reporter! A big opportunity, a big task—and Sherry was game. His story is the kind of thing that makes a man feel better for the reading.

(A Novelette)

LET 'im up! He's all shot to pieces!"

Somewhere—at some other time—that had been a slangy jest. Back yonder in the past, he had heard the expression over and over again. In the half-grown city from whence he came, that sentence had been an empty byword, quite meaningless, except to show disgust or derision when some one turned loose an alleged joke that had been long regarded as next of kin to the Chestnut family. And he had laughed at the words—laughed when he heard them—laughed when he used them.

But this was no joke. It might be time to laugh now, but he did not feel like trying. There is little fun in hard facts, and no fun at all when those facts have been driven home by soft-nosed bullets—leaden balls that tear the flesh and break the bone.

"Let 'im up! He's all shot to pieces!"

No, that was not right, either. The thing had to be changed.

"Let *me* up! *I'm* shot! *Me!* *Me!*—not the other fellow. If there's any joke about this, it's on *me*. If there is any laugh coming, it is not *my* turn; that other fellow would have to do the laughing."

And how could a man who was really shot get up, anyway? He couldn't; of course not. Three bullets—one through the left shoulder, and two in the right leg—would hold any man down. If that were not enough, there was something else. What was it that seemed like a dead weight across his body? Why, sure, there it was—a dead man, sprawling all over him. That must be the other fellow whose turn it was to laugh. But there was no laugh left in him. He was dead, and a dead weight, too.

These were the thoughts that slowly passed through the mind of Robert Morrison Sherwood during the first few moments of returning consciousness. "Robert Morrison Sherwood, war correspondent," he signed his name—or "Robert Morrison Sherwood, staff representative in the field," just as the mood struck him. But as "Sherry"—plain "Sherry"—he was known to all his friends.

A rising sun, for ages and ages the alarm clock of a world, had awakened him by shining straight in his face. Through thousands and thousands of years it had called its countless millions from their slumber to do the day's work, to weep and worry, to laugh and

labor, to sorrow and struggle, and then to lie down and sleep, only to be called again.

Now it had summoned him as it had every day of his life, and he had tried to arise just as he had every other day. For this sun was different; it was a Mexican sun, and, though only an hour high, it already burned and blistered the skin of his face and parched the sand in which he lay until it felt like red-hot ashes.

It was when he attempted to struggle to his feet that a sharp, nerve-tearing pain told him his right leg was useless; it was when he tried to get to his hands and knees that he found his left shoulder torn and broken, and his left arm numb and lifeless. And there was the man who held him down—the dead man lying across him.

Then it was, as he feebly turned his head to get his eyes away from the glaring sun, that he thought of the foolish phrase: "Let 'im up! He's all shot to pieces!" And what was that other line? Oh, yes:

"Seventeen men on a dead man's chest."

He had heard that, too, in some old song of the sea. Was it seven or seventeen? Well, it didn't matter. Whatever the number, it had nothing on him. The only thing that *was* on him was a dead man, and one dead man on a live man's chest was worse than seven or seventeen or seventy live men on a dead man's chest.

He raised his right hand—his good hand—to his face, and rubbed his eyes, trying to gather his scattered wits and think calmly. A shadow passed across his face, and he looked up. A buzzard; another, and still another, flapping lazy wings, circled low overhead. The howl of a coyote close at hand came to the wounded man's ears. The howl of a coyote in the daytime!

Why were the buzzards and the coyote there? Were there more dead men? Was this body lying across him only one of many? Sherwood raised his head, and looked around him. Ah, now he remembered!

Those ten or a dozen huddled heaps

he could see scattered about—yesterday they had been men. This morning they resembled mere bundles of clothes. Yesterday they had been his companions. To-day they were dead men, food for coyotes and buzzards, like this thing that held him down.

Those forty or fifty whitewashed adobe houses, the first of which was about a hundred yards from where he lay—that was the town that had been attacked, the town that had sheltered the two hundred federal soldiers who had put up such a grim and bloody fight against the hundred and fifty *insurrectos* in an effort to prevent those *insurrectos* from joining the rebel army besieging Juarez, where the troops of Diaz were making the last desperate stand in the state of Chihuahua.

Slowly Sherwood, with his right hand, pushed aside the body of the man who was lying on him. Inch by inch he squirmed from under the burden. Every movement caused him intense agony. His left arm was a dead weight that he dragged after him. He was compelled to push his right leg in the direction he was working. In spite of the sizzling heat of the sun, cold sweat stood on his forehead. He wiped it away with the palm of his hand, gave one last struggle, a final push, and he was free.

This thing that a moment before had been a load was now a pillow for his head. Propped in a half-sitting position, Sherwood looked out upon a scene which, save for the lean coyote skulking in the distance, and the buzzards above, held no signs of life. No human being moved among the village shacks; those nearer objects, those little heaps of clothes, each one of which a few hours since had been a "first-class fightin' man," would never move again.

As he gazed, the whole picture came back to Sherwood. The battle of yesterday afternoon passed in panorama before his eyes. Off there a few miles, showing in the blue haze that hung over the hills, was the narrow pass down which the tired, hungry, and saddle-worn *insurrectos* had ridden from the

mountains. They were on a forced march from the city of Chihuahua.

It was Tuesday afternoon, and Wednesday should see them on the outskirts of Juarez, with the main army of insurrectos, under General Navarro. This town of Caliente only stood between. Two hundred federal troops, commanded by Juan Fernandez, occupied Caliente, seventy-five miles from El Paso, and on the railroad between that city and Chihuahua. These troops had been rushed from Agua Prietas to repair the railroad, miles of which had been torn up by insurrectos, and to intercept any roving bands that might be seeking to join Navarro on the Rio Grande.

Sherwood, lying with eyes half closed, recalled how eagerly the insurrectos had welcomed the chance of battle on the road to Juarez; how they had detoured miles out of their way to engage and crush the stronger force of Fernandez at the little adobe village of Caliente, whose shot-riddled houses and deserted streets now told of dead or wounded men within, and inhabitants fled to the hills.

He remembered the first charge, wherein the insurrectos again showed how they outmatched the federals in the guerrilla warfare that was soon to change the entire scheme of government in Mexico. He could see the puffs of smoke and spats of flame from the windows of the houses; he could see the insurrectos circling in a long string around the town, each man clinging Indian fashion to the off side of his horse, using the loping animal as a shield, while he fired with rifle and revolver at every man that showed his head in street or building. For the insurrectos, recruited from the cowboys and plainmen of northern Mexico, knew how to ride, how to fight, how to shoot—and, better than all, how to starve. They lived off the country they passed through, and hunger was never more than a day distant. They had to fight to eat, and eat to fight, though they sometimes completely overlooked the latter rule.

Sherwood had taken no part in the

battle, although the battle had evidently taken part of him—part of his blood, part of his bone, part of his flesh. He was a noncombatant, not even armed, except for a revolver he had "lifted" from a dead soldier a week previous. He was a newspaper man, hunting an occasional story, and earning the few dollars that came to him in about the hardest way a reporter ever won a salary check.

He remembered how he had dropped from his pony when the insurrectos first came within gunshot of the town; how he had watched the circling troops draw closer to the houses; how he had heard the *crack-crack* of the revolvers and the deeper *bang-bang* of the rifles, until the excitement of it all, the smell of powder, and the shouts of the men had caused him to creep nearer and nearer, until, almost before he knew it, he was in the thickest of the fray, where bullets whistled their shrillest tune.

It was not his part to shoot, but he wanted that which every newspaper man wants—a good story, with good pictures. Here was a chance to get it, to feel the thing he was going to write about, to reel off a roll of films that would show they were taken where lead flew and men were dying.

No insurrecto or federal soldier had aimed his gun more carefully that afternoon than did Sherwood his camera; no man on either side took greater chances, or held his life cheaper. He forgot the risk, forgot everything, until he found himself almost within the shadow of the outlying houses.

And then the machine gun! It had been brought by a dozen Mexicans from between two of the 'dobs, and whirled into action in a place where it could command the insurrectos on three sides of the village. Sherwood recalled how it had rattled and roared as it mowed down horses and men; how it had been turned this way and that way, sending death in every direction; and how he had felt he must have one picture of that gun and the men behind it.

Then the sharp pain in his right leg

—the agony when it gave way beneath him, and he stumbled to his knees. He had struggled to rise, to run, to get out of range of that snapping, spitting engine of destruction. He had come up, standing on one foot, with the gun pointed squarely toward him. He heard no more shots, no more yells; he saw no more galloping horses. He felt an awful blow in his shoulder that made him spin half around, and he went dropping, dropping, down, down—a thousand miles, it seemed—through red flames and shooting stars. And that was all.

As the picture faded from Sherwood's mind, he opened his eyes, and looked once more on the scene of yesterday's bloody encounter.

There were the bullet-torn houses from which no shots came this morning; there was the machine gun, still and silent, with the half dozen black heaps surrounding it testifying that the men who had worked it with such deadly precision had themselves, in the end, been shot down. There was the humble church—Sherwood remembered how the soldiers in that building had dealt out the leaden messengers of death so unerringly he had almost fancied a Mightier Hand was training their guns on the insurrectos.

Over yonder on the far edge of the village was the railroad depot, with a few box cars lined up behind it. Each one of those cars had been a wooden fortress.

Far out on the plains, in the shadow of the hills, a half score of saddled, but riderless, horses nibbled at the dried bunch grass and greaseweed. Yesterday these animals had been ridden by a band of howling dervishes. Those men, whose raucous cries still rang in the reporter's ears, would ride no more. To-day they were the brown and huddled heaps that drew the hideous birds of prey and the cowardly prairie wolves. A coyote's howl was their funeral chant; the flapping of a buzzard's wings their requiem.

Over it all not a sound; no sign of human life. It did not take Sherwood's tired brain long to figure that one of

two things had happened: Either the federals had been routed from the town and had fled to the hills, with the insurrectos in pursuit, or the insurrectos had been beaten and had retreated toward Jaurez, with the soldiers following, in an effort to cut them off from Navarro's army.

II.

Sherwood's mouth was parched by thirst. The burning sun and the fever of his wounds made him feel almost as hot and dry as the sand in which he was lying. He looked around to see if there was a discarded canteen near by; he had left his own hanging to the saddle when he abandoned his pony at the beginning of the fight. There was none. The only things he saw were the two revolvers and rifle that had evidently belonged to the man who had been so inconsiderate as to fall dead across his body, and his own camera, which was lying near his right hand.

He reached for the apparatus, but one glance told him its days as a camera were over. It had suffered nearly as much as he had; two bullets had effectually killed its usefulness.

He tossed the shattered thing aside, and struggled to rise. Some way, somehow, he must get to those houses. There he would surely find water. He managed to turn over, and slightly raised his body, supporting himself on his right hand and left knee. As he did so, something white fluttered from his shirt to the ground. He looked, and saw a folded and crumpled paper. Once more he propped himself against the dead man, and picked up the packet. It was a sealed envelope, unaddressed; around it was a sheet of paper torn from a pocket memorandum book, and covered with writing in a dim scrawl that was almost illegible.

The reporter looked more closely at the body he was using as a pillow. The features, even in death, proved the man to be an American. The shirt was open, and the front was stained with blood. The man had been shot in the chest, and a bloodstained handkerchief near

by showed he had vainly tried to stanch the red stream. The fingers of the right hand still clutched a long rifle cartridge. The leaden bullet had served him as a pencil, and he had written the message, wrapped it around the envelope, and stuck both in Sherwood's shirt. Apparently that had been his last act, and he had expired the moment after he had put the message where it would surely be found.

With difficulty, the newspaper man deciphered the indistinct scribble:

You will live—just leg broke, shoulder hit. I looked you over. I'm all in. Going to die soon. You're an American—me, too. Help me out. Open letter and read it. Get message to Navarro some way by dark Wednesday night. No time to lose. All up to you now. Read and see. You're newspaper man—can do it easy.

J. LAMBERT,
American Insurrecto.

With his teeth and his right hand, for his left was merely an impediment, Sherwood tore open the envelope around which the note had been twisted. It contained a letter written in Spanish, but Sherwood had been in Mexico long enough to be able to make out its contents. Translated, this is what he read:

General Enrique Y. Navarro, in command Mexican Revolutionary forces before Juarez—under Francisco I. Madero, president.

Attack Juarez with your entire army before midnight Wednesday. Disregard all orders to wait until Friday or Saturday. Have just learned heavy reinforcements from south are coming to relief of city. These troops will arrive Friday. Also explosives will be brought over from American side, and city will be surrounded by dynamite and mines, which can be set off by electricity when you attack. These explosives are to arrive early Thursday morning and will be placed that day. If you delay beyond Wednesday night you will be attacked in rear, driven toward city, and your army annihilated. Traitors in our conferences who knew of these things were responsible for our plans whereby you were first instructed to postpone attack until Friday or Saturday. Await no further orders, but attack on receipt of this. Wires are down between Chihuahua and El Paso, and we can get no word to our junta there or to Madero. A victory for you at Juarez means successful termination of revolution. Defeat means continued warfare. When you attack Juarez, do so principally from

east and west; avoid, if possible, shooting across river into El Paso. Yours for Mexico,
PASQUALE MARTINEZ.

Sherwood drew a long breath, and probably would have whistled his surprise had his mouth not been so dry it felt like it was full of hot sand. Then he read the letter a second time. It was official, all right. It bore the seal of the insurrecto government, and he recognized the signature of Martinez, for this man, high in the counsels of the insurrectos, had given him a personally signed pass to any part of the insurrecto lines.

He had also heard of Lambert as being one of the most daring scouts and secret agents in the insurrecto ranks—a man who feared nothing, and was shrewd and resourceful. Well, Lambert had carried his last message, for here he lay dead. But he had proved his resourcefulness, and also that he possessed something else—nerve or gall it had usually been called where Sherwood hailed from.

Here was a pretty state of affairs! A newspaper man goes foraging in a strange land for stories and pictures that may or may not sell for a few dollars; he is riddled by bullets, lies unconscious through a whole night, and when he regains his senses in the morning finds he has been chosen heir by a dead man, has been left an incriminating document to deliver, has been forced into the secret service of the insurrecto government, and elected savior of the cause. Fine legacy that!

Besides, there was another phase to the situation. Suppose the federal troops had been victorious yesterday afternoon, and should return to the town after pursuing the insurrectos and killing as many as they could? Sherwood knew they would search the dead, and the living, too. They always did, and usually appropriated everything they found—guns, money, and any other valuables. If he was caught with this letter on him, it would surely be "curtains for Robert Morrison Sherwood, war correspondent." He was certain of that. He would be taken for a secret-service man, and his finish

would be the finish of all such who were so unfortunate as to be captured. Blindfolded, he would be stood with his face to a white adobe wall while a dozen soldiers tried to see how near they could shoot to the little circle drawn on his shirt in the middle of his back. Sherwood pondered this, and felt quite sure he had been born for other things.

And still he liked those *insurrectos*. He had been in their camps almost from the beginning of the war. He knew they were fighting for what they thought would be a newer and better Mexico. Their officers had treated him fairly, and shared what little they had with him. True, he had cast his lot with them from rather selfish motives—because they were the aggressors, always on the march, and attacking here, there, and everywhere. But he had suffered when they suffered, had eaten when they ate, and gone hungry when they fasted. Hardship makes for fraternity, and so Sherwood had come at last to almost regard the *insurrecto* cause as his cause.

Now it was for him to act. It seemed as though Lambert's spirit urged him on. The man before dying had trusted in him. His last act had been to scribble an appeal to a stranger who would live, asking that stranger to comply with the request of one who must die. Such a plea could not go unheeded. An effort, and a strong effort, too, must be made to get the message to Juarez on time. For it was Wednesday, and didn't the letter say the city *must* be attacked that night? If there was delay, the *insurrectos* would find a fresh army in their rear, and with the mines in place any subsequent attack would be a massacre.

But Juarez was seventy-five miles away, and how was a man with two bullets in his leg and another in his shoulder going to carry a message nearly fourscore miles? He did not even have a horse—his was probably one of those roaming far out on the prairie—and he could not have climbed into a saddle if he had possessed a dozen horses. If some of the *insurrectos*

would return, the riddle might be solved. If they did not—well, Navarro would probably not get that letter for some time.

However, first on his program was water. That he must have, and immediately, too. Surely there was water in the village, and he must get to that village some way. He saw Lambert's long-barreled rifle lying near, and an idea came to him. He crawled to it, and, by using it for a support, finally stood upright on his left foot. Then, with the gun under his right arm as a crutch, he began to hop and limp toward the houses. His progress was slow, and each movement caused him excruciating pain. While hobbling that few hundred feet, he had ample time for reflection, to think of the circumstances that had brought him here—a sorely wounded man, thirsty and hungry—in a deserted village in a strange land. Sherwood's story was short:

He had been a reporter in a manufacturing city of about fifty thousand inhabitants in the middle West. He had studied hard and worked faithfully, always giving the best there was in him; but the salary check he drew each Monday had been woefully small. Probably he possessed a little more ambition than is given to the average man, for, aside from trying to get ahead in the newspaper game, he had attended a business college, where, at night, while others played, he had taken the courses in stenography and telegraphy—the first because it helped him in his reportorial work, and the latter because he liked it, and it could be turned into a source of revenue.

Frequently he had "pieced out" a meager pay envelope by substituting for some of the boys on the night shift at the local telegraph office.

Sherwood had been content with these conditions until The Girl came into his life. The Girl was Clara Norman, and the first time Sherwood saw her that Monday morning when she came into the office to "do society," he knew the size of that weekly check must be increased—it must be made large enough for two.

No use to describe Clara Norman. In Sherwood's eyes, she was the prettiest, the sweetest, and the smartest girl in the world. Of course, she was neither of these, but he thought so, and that is sufficient for this story.

When the war in Mexico broke out, Sherwood believed he saw the great chance. He went as a free lance, beginning with only the paper in his home town, which took a weekly story of a couple of thousand words. In three months he had enlarged his field until he had a half dozen papers on his string, each one taking daily specials on battles, Mexican politics, and anything else that carried news value.

The Girl was still working on the paper back home, writing of the "happenings in our best social circles"; but she knew what Sherwood was doing—knew why he went—knew he was working hard to bring the figures on that check up to where he wanted them. In fact, she quite approved of the scheme. She liked it so well that when he left she had given him a hug and a kiss he still remembered, and had told him to "go to it."

Sherwood had been on the lookout for a place to land when the war would be ended, and had found it in El Paso, with an international news agency, where his knowledge of Mexico and its affairs would assure him a good salary.

Two days previous to the battle at Caliente he had been in Chihuahua, where he had learned Juarez was to be attacked by the insurrectos on Friday or Saturday of that week, and if the revolutionists were victorious it would be the last battle of the war.

This information dovetailed with his plans. He had arranged, the last time he was in El Paso, to go to work for the news agency on Monday of the coming week. He had also written The Girl a letter she had long been awaiting, telling her the glad news that the check gave promise of immediate and considerable growth, and that his present plans called for her resignation from the paper in the old home town, and her presence in El Paso on that coming Monday, when she would, for

one time, at least, if never again, furnish a society item without having to write it herself.

All this had been very pleasant to contemplate two days before, when he had joined the insurrecto band because their destination was Juarez. Forty-eight hours ago everything had fitted together like a set of picture blocks. The battle of Juarez would be the biggest story of the war; it would also be the close of the revolution. The good job waited in El Paso, just across the Rio Grande. Monday would be the great day—war forgotten, fine position, check big enough for two, The Girl, and happiness!

All these things Sherry pondered as he limped and wormed his way toward Caliente. Two days ago! Many things can happen in a few hours; much can happen in a few minutes—that machine gun of yesterday afternoon, for instance. The *sizz* of a flat-nosed bullet does not harmonize with the wedding march. To a man with a shattered shoulder and leg, El Paso, seventy-five miles distant, was a long way off; and Monday, which yesterday had seemed so far away, to-day appeared surprisingly near at hand.

Often had he laughed at the ancient joke about the bridegroom being a useless adjunct. But that would have to be altered now—a bridegroom was something more than a figurehead, after all. He was one of the "props" that could not be dispensed with if the show was to go on. But a wounded bridegroom on a deserted battlefield, coyotes and buzzards for companions, and a gun for a crutch, with a letter in his pocket which, if found, would bring him an overdose of lead—well, that sort of bridegroom hardly came up to specifications.

III.

When Sherwood turned the corner of the first house, he almost stumbled over the sprawled body of a man that lay across his path. He was a federal soldier, arms outstretched, eyes staring straight up at the blue sky. The very position in which he lay—on his

back—showed he was as dead as Santa Anna. When a man struck by a bullet drops forward on his face, there is some hope; when he falls on his back he is a dead bird.

By the side of the soldier was a canteen, and this Sherry grabbed. He had some difficulty in unscrewing the cap with one hand, but when he at last got in open he drank until the thing was drained. The hot, brackish water caused the reporter to make a wry face, but he downed it, nevertheless. It was so filled with alkali about all that could be said for it was that it was wet. In Mexico and in the Southwest there is water which has so much alkali it will eat away the lining of a locomotive boiler in six or eight months, and Sherwood felt sure he had chanced upon some of this corroding liquid.

Even at that, the drink refreshed him and brought back some of his hopefulness and a portion of the courage and ambition which in the last three months had made him chase stories and pictures where whistling bullets told him he was earning all the money he received for them.

The determination to get that message through to Navarro grew stronger. It would not do to let the *insurrectos*, who had befriended him so many times, walk blindly into a trap by following the advice of traitors in their own ranks. Besides, he believed the *insurrectos* were fighting for the right. Mexico was ready for a new deal. It meant a better, more prosperous country.

Sherwood looked up the dirty, sandy street. Not a soul was in sight. Caliente, yesterday so noisy with life, this morning was a tomb. At the far end of the street stood the little white church, and across from it was the railroad depot, with the box cars standing on the track beyond.

The depot gave Sherwood an idea. He knew railroad tracks were torn up and bridges burned between this town and El Paso, but the telegraph wires might not be cut. The *insurrectos* were putting the railroads out of commission to prevent the federal troops from be-

ing reënforced from the south. But the *insurrectos*, holding the upper hand, were not cutting wires—they needed those as badly as did the enemy.

True, the letter from Martinez to Navarro said the wires were down out of Chihuahua, but that might be between Chihuahua and Caliente, where bridges carrying poles had been destroyed, and not between Caliente and the Rio Grande. Then, too, this railroad was only a branch of the El Paso & Southwestern, crossing the river fifteen miles below Juarez at Hermanez, where it forked, one line entering El Paso from the east, and the other going on to Alamogordo. Juarez was not on this road.

There was a chance anyway. Sherwood knew he could never hope, in any event, to get the *insurrectos* on a telegraph line. They were surrounding Juarez on three sides—the south, east, and west—with the Rio Grande on the north, and were probably cut off from all wire communication. Any message to reach them must come through their junta at El Paso, where President Madero was.

It was, indeed, a forlorn hope. The one best thing of it all was that Sherwood knew the El Paso operator of this jerkwater railroad. This operator was Billy Swayne. Billy had a pronounced weakness for feminine society, and as his daily shift was a long one, Sherwood had on several occasions relieved him for a few hours as a mere matter of accommodation, and because the reporter desired to keep in practice on the key.

If he could only get Billy Swayne on the line, he would whip that message through in a hurry, and with time to spare. Midnight was still sixteen hours away.

So Sherwood, having rested in an open doorway while he figured these things out, again took up his improvised crutch, and hobbled toward the depot. His progress was so painfully slow it took him a good hour to reach his destination.

As he advanced, he noted that the federals had suffered heavy losses in

the fight, for he counted upward of twoscore bodies in the streets, and he was sure the houses contained many more. The natives had evidently fled to the hills before the battle, and it would probably be days before they ventured back. As he observed the results of the *insurrectos'* deadly aim, he felt confident the federals had been defeated, and had retreated toward Chihuahua, or had taken to the mountains, with the *insurrectos* in pursuit. And that was in accordance with his wishes, for the last thing he wanted to meet while he had that letter in his possession was a federal soldier.

It was with almost his last strength that he climbed onto the depot platform. The wound in his shoulder was bleeding afresh, and he could feel the warm blood trickling down his arm inside his shirt. But he heard the *click-click* of a telegraph instrument inside the depot—the sweetest music that had ever come to Sherwood's ears. The line was open to—somewhere.

He looked in the window, and the sight that met his gaze caused his eyes to stare almost foolishly, while his under jaw sagged down. Inside, a man with his shirt sleeves rolled up sat in a chair before the table on which stood the clicking instrument. His head was resting on the table, and his arms hung stiffly at his sides. He had been shot through the head, and had died at his post. Three men, the blue of their uniforms showing they were federal soldiers, lay dead on the floor, while a fourth, also dead, hung over a window sill in the rear, the lower half of his body inside the room, the upper half, arms dangling, on the outside.

There was nothing to fear from these men, and Sherwood staggered through the door into the room that looked more like a shambles than a railroad station.

There was no way to get at the instrument except by dumping the dead operator onto the floor, and this Sherwood did without much ceremony. Then he sat down, and listened as the machine reeled off the dots and dashes. He could only make out that it was some railroad message not intended for

Caliente, and was only coming through because the line had been left open. Almost as he sat down the message was finished, and the wire was silent.

Loss of blood and the pain caused by his exertions of the last couple of hours had rendered Sherwood weak. His brain was in a whirl; he was dizzy and dazed; black specks floated before his eyes, and he felt that whatever he did must be done quickly.

Sherwood knew that "EP" was the signal for El Paso, and, even though he had never been so hard pressed in his limited experience as to be compelled to use it, he knew that "Death," repeated many times, would get the instant attention of any operator on the line. His fingers fell on the key, and he began to call:

"EP, EP. Death, death, death! EP, EP! Death, death, death!"

He waited, striving to keep his senses, but no reply came. Maybe he could get the operator at Hermanez, where the road forked. He called again:

"Hermanez! Death, death, death! Hermanez! Death, death, death!"

Still no reply. One chance remained. He could not recall the signal for Alamagordo, so he spelled it out:

"Death, death, death! Alamagordo, Alamagordo!"

Twice he repeated it, and then gave up in despair. He was to fail, after all. Here he was, dying, alone, beyond reach of human aid. No one knew where he was; even the news of yesterday's battle had not been given to the world. The big story to be gotten at Juarez was not for him. The news agency would wait a long time if they expected him to report for work. The *insurrecto* cause—the cause of the men who had done the decent thing by him—would receive a blow from which it could never recover. And The Girl on Monday—

The thought of The Girl spurred him to try once more. That instrument had been clicking when he came into the room. The line was open to some point. Mechanically he repeated his

last call. Then the miracle happened. Back came the answer:

"AG, AG."

Now he remembered. Alamagordo's call was AG, and he had that city, ninety miles from El Paso, and away up in New Mexico, on the line. Before he could reply, the clicking continued:

"AG, AG; this is Alamagordo; who are you?"

The answer acted as a tonic to the worn reporter. He forgot his hunger, his thirst, his pain. He clutched the key, and sent:

"Caliente, Caliente. Battle here. Operator killed. Get Swayne, at El Paso. Matter life and death."

He listened as the instrument spelled off the answer:

"Hernandez-El Paso wires down. No operator at Hernandez. No trains to Caliente past week. Road torn up."

Well, that cleared up a few points, but it did not help the situation much. It explained why no reply had come from Hernandez or El Paso, and that was all. The operator at Alamagordo might get the message to El Paso through some other office, but Sherwood was almost afraid to chance that, except as a last resort, fearing it might be garbled in transmission. So he wired:

"Can you get El Paso direct by any method? Must talk to Swayne."

The reply to this brought Sherwood renewed courage:

"Can get El Paso through Cloudsburg and Agate City. About an hour. Can you wait?"

That much delay would not be fatal, and there would be no danger of mistakes, so Sherwood sent back "Yes," and settled back in the chair to pass the time as best he could. He left the line open, and even had he been able he would not have dared to leave the depot for fear he might not hear the call from El Paso when it came. While the minutes dragged by, he tried to stanch the flow of blood from his shoulder. He had poor success, and he realized he was growing weaker, and the

call must soon come or he would not be able to answer.

After forty-five minutes had passed, when his head had fallen forward on his breast, and he was doing his utmost to hold his senses in hand, the instrument clicked:

"Caliente, Caliente. This is El Paso."

At the first sound, Sherwood was thoroughly alive again. He must not lose a second now; he must cut things short. He answered:

"Get Swayne."

The little machine under his hand brought him the words: "This is Swayne." Then the reporter settled to his task:

"Hello, Billy! This is Sherwood—Sherry. In battle Caliente; shot all to pieces; leg busted; shoulder smashed. Lambert, secret service, killed. Found message on him from Martinez, Chihuahua, to Navarro, Juarez. You must get it to insurrecto junta, El Paso, quick. Says disregard previous plans and attack Juar——"

Right in the middle of the message that meant so much to the Madero forces, the *dum-dum, dum-dum* of galloping ponies came to Sherwood's startled ears. He looked out of the window, over the sill of which the dead body of the soldier hung. Out on the sun-baked prairie, not more than a hundred yards away, two men were riding. One glance told Sherwood they were federal soldiers. They were just across the tracks, and were headed straight for the depot.

In the middle of a word, the reporter stopped, drew his revolver, and laid it on the table. Then he grabbed the key again, and ticked off:

"Billy, wait; hold line open."

Before he had finished, he heard the flinty striking of the hoofs on the rock ballast between the rails. He could no longer see the men; they had made a slight detour around the box cars, and he was sure, if they were coming into the depot, they would come through the door, for the window was too high to reach from the outside.

The reporter thought of the Marti-

nez letter. It would never do to be caught with that in his pocket, and he did not need it; he knew its contents by heart. He drew it out, and tossed it into a corner, where it fell among some newspapers lying on the floor.

The soldiers had dismounted, and Sherwood could hear their heavy tread on the platform. He picked up his revolver, squirmed around in his chair until he faced the open door, and waited. He did not propose to be captured at all if he could prevent it. Letter or no letter, the soldiers knew he was not one of them; his wounds showed he had been in the fight; therefore, they would figure he had fought with the *insurrectos*, and that spelled death in capital letters. Americans taken prisoner in battle by the federals stood small chance, for the troops of Diaz's army regarded this war as purely a Mexican family affair, and none of the *gringos'* business. Besides, to be captured meant that that message would never get through—and Billy was still on the line.

A shadow fell across the doorway, and a hatless and coatless Mexican stepped into the room. He drew back in startled surprise at the leveled gun and Sherwood's gray eyes sighting along the barrel. His hand flew to his belt, and he half turned, as though to leap back out of range. But at that instant the revolver cracked, and he fell in a crumpled heap in the streak of sunlight shining through the door.

The report of the gun was followed by a sharp Spanish oath, and the second soldier sprang into the room, revolver in hand. Sherwood fired again, but his aim was unsteady, and the bullet only splintered the door casing.

The Mexican raised his revolver—a large army weapon that would throw a chunk of lead as large as a pigeon's egg—took deliberate aim, and pressed the trigger. Twice the hammer snapped harmlessly on empty shells. With a second oath, he threw the gun at the reporter's head. It struck Sherwood's wrist, and his revolver spun out of his hand and fell on the table, out of reach. The reporter grabbed the edge of the

table, and started to pull himself upright on his left leg to a position where he could get his hand on his revolver.

The Mexican's black eyes swept the room in search of a weapon. Evidently it never occurred to his slow-thinking mind that his companion, lying on the floor, had two revolvers stuck in his belt, for, instead of seizing one of them, he picked up the first thing that came to hand—a short-handled ax lying in a wood box in a corner near a small stove. The Caliente operator had used it to cut his supply of mesquite wood, for even in that latitude the nights in the foothills are chilly, and fire is a necessity.

Sherwood had turned, and just as his hand touched his revolver the hatchet whizzed past his head, within two inches of his ear. He heard a dull *chug*, glanced up, and saw the sharp blade buried half its depth in the wooden casing of the window beside the table. The two wires from the telegraph instrument were strung up this casing to the top, where they left the building, and the steel had severed them as completely as though the job had been done with wire cutters.

Sherwood grabbed his revolver, and wheeled around on the Mexican, his anger causing him for the moment to forget the pain in his shoulder and leg.

"Now you've played hell, haven't you, you greaser skunk!" he shouted, on the point of killing in his tracks the one who unintentionally, but nevertheless surely, had rendered it impossible to get through the message that might save the *insurrectos* from slaughter.

The onrush of the soldier brought him within arm's length of the reporter, and the latter, in his rage, shoved the steel barrel against the Mexican's mouth until he could feel the teeth grate against it. He snarled again:

"Yes, you've played particular hell!" Then, as a new scheme flashed through his brain, he added: "Or you think you have. But I'll fool you."

Dropping the muzzle of the weapon from the bleeding lips of the Mexican, but still keeping him covered, Sherwood said, using Spanish where he

could, with English sprinkled in to help out:

"Get up on that table, Mex. Up with you, you murdering dog! You'll hold those wires together if it shocks you so you grind your yellow teeth to powder. Climb, you coyote!"

He had to repeat the order in response to the Mexican's vigorous "No sabe," but finally got him onto the table.

"Pull out that ax—pull it out! Drop it on the floor, and don't make a false move, or you're dead as a codfish. Now, you hold the ends of those wires together. The four ends—all four of 'em. Put 'em back like they were before you threw that cleaver. That's right! Now hold 'em there."

Apparently the cut wires helped the Mexican to understand what was wanted, for he soon had the hatchet wrenched from the casing, and was holding the four points of wire so they touched. The wires were insulated, and he did not suffer the teeth-crushing shock which Sherwood had been quite willing for him to receive.

"Now, you stand there, old greaser boy, until I tell you to get down," ordered the reporter. "It's the only time in your life you've ever been a live wire, and you won't have to be that very long."

Sherwood laid his revolver where he could grab it, if necessary, lowered himself into the chair, and clicked off:

"Billy, are you there?"

When he received an affirmative reply, he resumed the message:

"Just stopped to kill a Mex and put another to work. Letter on Lambert says Navarro must attack Juarez not later than midnight Wednesday—today. Disregard all previous plans and orders. Dynamite and mines coming into Juarez from El Paso early Thursday. Federal reinforcements from South will attack Navarro army Friday if he delays. Previous plans to attack Friday or Saturday result of advice from traitors in insurrecto councils. Put it up to junta strong. No mistake. If Navarro waits beyond Wednesday he will be whipped to hell, and——"

Once again there was the thumping of ponies' hoofs on hard ground.

"More soldiers," was the thought that instantly passed through Sherwood's mind.

Up to that moment neither man had taken his eyes off the other. The reporter craned his neck in an effort to peer around the Mexican on the table and look through the window to see who was approaching. The soldier saw his chance; he sprang back, and fell onto Sherwood like a hod of bricks. The chair was overturned, the reporter crashed to the floor, a hand clutched at his throat; he felt a squirming body pressing on him, something that glistened struck him on top of the head. A second and third time that glittering thing rose and fell, all the stars in the heavens danced blood red before his eyes, and then everything went pitch black.

IV.

A sensation of jolting and lurching that seemed to be tearing him limb from body caused Sherwood to open his eyes. It was night, and he could see the pale stars shining dimly above.

Slowly his senses returned; he realized his left arm was resting in a rude sling, and his right leg was tightly bandaged. He felt he was in some sort of vehicle that squeaked and groaned over a rough road.

In spite of the fact that he was lying on his back in a pile of straw, and that his head was pillowed on a bundle of clothing, every jolt caused him the most intense pain. From somewhere above him a voice seemed to be urging tired horses to renewed efforts, and off to one side there was a yellow glow in the sky.

"What's the matter? Where am I?" Sherwood asked, surprised at the faintness of his own voice.

The voice above answered: "Awake, eh? Well, I reckon you're in an old bum cart, that's where you are, but it's the best we could do for you. An' you better go to sleep again, youngster."

"But tell me what happened—I fell

out of the chair—then what?" the reporter queried feebly.

"Yes; reckon you did that, all right, an' with the greaser atop of you," came back the voice. "We sure came just in time. He beaned you with the butt of a gun or a hatchet; we couldn't tell which, an' we didn't wait fer him to explain. He won't explain no more, neither, that greaser won't—'ceptin' it might be on judgment day."

"Well, who are you? I can't see you," Sherwood persisted in his questioning.

"Now, you're not missin' much, at that, son, if you can't see me. I'm just Bill Craig, soldier o' fortune, I guess I am, like I take it you be, too. Just down here helpin' these fellows out fer the promise of a peso a day an' a lot o' glory."

"What's that racket? I hear sounds like pounding—and what's that light off there? It looks like a fire," asked the wounded man.

"Rreckon it's Juarez," said the driver, who appeared to "reckon" everything. "Can't be more than a few miles out now. Understand they're havin' some onpleasantness there. Burnin' a few shacks, too, most likely. Looks like it might be a right smart fire."

"Juarez! A battle, and a fire!" repeated Sherwood dully, trying to raise himself, and falling back weakly. "What day is this—what day?"

"Well, I'd say 'twas Friday mornin', along about two o'clock or thereabout. An' I'd opine that was sure some battle you're a-hearin'," replied Craig. "Enough talk now, son. I calculate not to run you into no danger. If you want anything, I'll give it to you if I got it, but you're pretty nigh used up, an' you best go to sleep."

Friday morning! Then his message had done no good. He had almost given his life to get it through; had fought to his last gasp; had suffered tortures—was suffering them now, for that matter—and all to no purpose. Had that second band of horsemen not been friends, he would never have left that depot alive. And the insurrectos should have attacked Wednesday at midnight.

That was twenty-six hours ago. Undoubtedly the federal reinforcements had arrived, and the insurrectos, attacked from the rear, were being driven onto the mines that had been placed Thursday.

Friday morning! How could Billy have failed? Yes, he might just as well go to sleep.

Weak and wearied and worried, he closed his eyes, and either slept or again became unconscious. He never knew which.

He slept to be awakened by the pressure of a soft hand as it stroked his forehead and pushed the hair back from his face. He looked up at a white ceiling, and over to where the sunlight streamed in at an open window. Instead of being in a jouncing, rumbling cart, he was lying on the softest, whitest bed he had known for months, and his bandaged head rested on downy pillows. Again the hand fell, cool and caressing, on his forehead, and he turned to look—

Wonder of wonders—it was The Girl!

He stared up into her face, seized the hand to see if it were not all a dream, and then cried out:

"Clara! Clara! What does it mean? Where am I, and how did you come here?"

"Sh! You mustn't talk," came the answer, in low tones, while tears came to the girl's eyes—tears of happiness at his returning consciousness. "You are a sick boy, and you will not get well soon if you become excited."

But Sherwood could not hold in. The words came in spite of the admonition:

"Talk—talk? I've got to talk! Tell me where I am, and all about it. And how did you come here?"

"Well, then, I'll make it very brief," replied the girl, feeling the only way to calm him was to set his mind at rest. "You are in a hospital in El Paso, and a Mr. Swayne, a friend of yours, telegraphed me Wednesday, and I came right on as soon as I could."

"Wednesday! Came right on?" repeated Sherwood. "What day is this?"

"Friday," Clara answered. "Friday afternoon, about three o'clock."

"I seem to be getting through the days pretty rapidly," the reporter said, with a feeble attempt at a smile. "The last time I was awake was at two o'clock this morning. At this rate, Monday is only about two sleeps away." Then, as The Girl blushed prettily, showing she understood, Sherwood added: "But the battle? The fight at Juarez? I heard the guns. Was I—was I—too late? Tell me; please do!"

With her hand again patting his hot forehead, The Girl told him:

"No, Bobby, boy. Mr. Swayne got the message, and, while at first they could not understand it, they figured it right in the end. The insurrectos—is that what you call them?—attacked the city across the river at eleven o'clock Wednesday night. The battle lasted thirty-two hours. They were still fighting this morning when I got here, for I, too, heard the guns. And, oh, Bobby, I guess I cried a good bit, for every time one of those cannon roared it seemed my heart would burst, because I knew

you were over there somewhere. But they brought you around the city, and got you here all right. And then I know I kissed you a lot. They say you are a hero—just the biggest kind of a hero—but I don't believe I was much of a heroine. I couldn't help it; I wanted my Bobby, and I didn't care anything about their old war when I saw you, wounded so badly, lying in that cart. But your side won, and a Mexican has been here twice within the last hour to see you. Let me see—what is his name? Oh, yes! Madero—that's it! He's the leader of the side that won."

"Fine! Fine!" exclaimed Sherwood fervently. "It's great to know I put the thing through, but we'll forget the hero business, girlie. We must get ready for Monday; we can't put *that* off. I was only a hero by proxy, anyway. The real hero is lying out there in the desert, with the cartridge he used for a pencil clutched in his dead hand. His name was Joe Lambert—plain Joe Lambert—just one of the army—soldier of a Greater Mexico!"



THE BOOST THAT BORAH GOT

SENATOR WILLIAM E. BORAH, of Idaho, is one of the most democratic fellows you ever saw, and he goes around Washington wearing a blue sack suit and a felt hat—all of which leads Mrs. Borah to give him numerous lectures in a gentle manner, indicating her belief that he should have more regard for his senatorial dignity and drape his stalwart form in a Prince Albert coat, not to mention pressing down upon his belligerent brow a high silk hat. So far, however, the senator has not increased the sale of frock coats, but has enjoyed a wonderful degree of physical comfort, the story of which he has frequently unfolded to Senator Gore, the blind man from Oklahoma.

One evening Borah told his wife that he had received a great compliment, the same being that he was the best-dressed man in the United States Senate. Mrs. Borah, sitting on the other side of the reading table, made no answer and conveyed the general idea that the conversation had reached a stage which bored her immensely.

"My dear, you don't seem interested," said the senator, looking across at her, "and you don't ask me who paid me the compliment."

"I am always interested in everything you do and anything that happens to you," replied Mrs. Borah, "but I don't have to ask you who told you about being so well dressed. I know who it was. It was Senator Gore."

The Late Mr. Jenkins

By Emerson Hough

Author of "The Mississippi Bubble," "The Purchase Price," Etc.

Curly, the cow-puncher, tells how with the assistance of a lawyer friend, Dan Anderson, he regulated the railroad rates on the branch line to Sunshine. It took a funeral to do it, and "the late Mr. Jenkins" was selected for the honor

I READ in a correspondence-school lesson once," said Curly, my cow-puncher friend, one day when in a reminiscent mood, "that the thing to do is to master all the deetails in your own business, an' to exercise energy, industry, an' economy; all o' such bein' helpful to your coefficient of industry. I done pretty well thataway for a while, anyhow. What's more, last month I was in on the play when Dan Anderson an' me regulated the railroad rates on the branch line to Sunshine. O' course, you remember Dan Anderson—we all used to train together down on the range thirty years ago."

"Dan Anderson—you mean that he's been out here in Wyoming, Curly?" I demanded. "I thought he was practicing law in New York."

"Yes, he is. You see, he went to New York to settle up his poppa-in-law's estate, an' he liked it so well he stayed. I reckon maybe he's made all kinds o' money down there, too; any-ways, enough to back his son, Willy, out here fer a ranch."

"Now, Willy Anderson, he's Dan's son—rancher down here a little ways—he leans to sheep an' babies—neither o' which ain't antiseptic, to my notion. Anyhow, in the old times, you might 'a' rode sign for days and never set eyes on a baby or a baa-baa. Dan he comes out to see how his last grandson is gittin' along, I reckon; an' I reckon he discovers some difference between now an' the time when you could hang your coat on a wire fence an' sit in the shade an' eat

a can o' tomatoes an' feel all right—where to-day you got to have a automobile an' a room with bawth at the hotel.

"Well, anyhow, Dan come out. I couldn't see that he was much changed. He dropped right in here like as though it was down to Heart's Desire—an' on the side o' the boys, too, like he always was.

"For instance, here is Hank Skelly, the saddle man, an' he's awful sore at the railroad company for chargin' eight dollars freight on two cinch rings from Omaha to Sunshine. Seems like the railroad just charged everybody what they felt like, an' this raised the price o' saddles so that the average man couldn't afford to have no embroidery at all on his leather. Willy 'lows his dad Dan is the finest lawyer ever come into town; an', bein' some sore hisself on the price o' freig't on wool an' baby wagons, they both take their case up to poppa. I was with 'em when they put this up to Dan.

"Now, Dan, when he gits anything o' that sort on his mind he goes into a trance, an' begins to sing, same as you would to the cows when they begin to mill in the night. He's lookin' over the freight bills, an', after about half a hour, he says: 'Boys, it's a outrage.'

"I know it, dad," says Willy; "but what kin we do about it? I'm plumb proud o' my country's institutions; but I shore would like to break even on my summer's work. It looks like we had a good chanct to make a kick, because the

private car o' the president an' the head law counsel o' the road is right here in town now.'

"'We'll see,' says Dan Anderson, lookin' thoughtful. 'We'll have to fix up some scheme to show 'em that what is sauce for the goose is for the gander, just the same. I reckon I know both o' them men, an' they both know me. Well, let's stroll over to the depot, and maybe we can start something somehow.'

"We walks over to the depot, all of us, an' on the platform, Dan still an' singin' like he was on night herd. All at once, Dan he stops an' begins to read careful the brass sign that is nailed on the door of a passenger car standin' there. It says:

"Passengers are forbidden to be upon the platform or steps, or in any baggage, express, or mail car.

"Dan he looks at this for a while, an' says he to me: 'Curly, is there airy funeral in town to-day anywheres that you know of?'

"'Why, no,' says I. 'But what on earth has that got to do with cinch rings an' wool an' baby carriages?'

"'A whole lot, maybe,' says he. 'But why no funeral?' says Dan. 'An' if not, why can't you make one?'

"'Nobody dies here,' says I. 'It's a health resort. If people git sick, we send 'em down to the springs an' let 'em die there. As for any real enterprise, they hasn't been a shootin' affair in town sence when I kin remember.'

"'Is that so?' says Dan. 'Life must be interestin' out here! Well, that don't make no difference. There's got to be a funeral here in town right away. I need some remains—I mean a dear departed, to be sent back East to the loved ones at home, over this here railroad. Moreover, ef we can't git a real live remains, so to speak, we got to scare up one of our own, somehow—it's part o' the case, as I see it now.'

"We all scratched our heads, an' nobody could tell what to do. Dan, he won't never show his hand till he gits ready. At last he quits singin'.

"'Here, I'll tell you,' says he. 'You got put a notice in both the papers here,

tellin' o' the death o' Jenkins, over on Rock Creek—David Henry Jenkins his name was.'

"'Ain't no sech a man there,' says I.

"'I know it,' says Dan. 'That's why I want it put in the papers thataway—if they was sech a man, he might be annoyed at our sayin' he was dead. Now, this Dave Henry Jenkins over on Rock Creek, he's a old man that's been in there for his lungs, an' he's been took sudden of pneumonia. The remains is comin' up by wagon, an' will be here tomorrow some time—Hank, you git the right kind of a box, an' fix it up with hay, an' stones, an' plenty of ice against the time I'm goin' to need the remains of pore ole Pa Jenkins.'

"'I'm on here, o' course,' says he, 'to take care o' these remains an' git the pore ole man back to his home in Pennsylvania, where he's a wealthy manufacturer of iron—that's why I came out here, me bein' his lawyer, an' hearin' he ain't well. Pore ole man—he wasn't a year over fifty-nine. I kin see him now—weighs about a hundred an' seventy-five pounds. Nice man, with gray hair an' fine, little, white side whiskers high up. Had a little mole on one side o' his nose. Don't you remember?'

"Well, sir, I could begin to see Mr. Jenkins right then. I knowed right where his ranch was on Rock Creek. I could 'specially remember them little whiskers an' that mole on his cheek. That was a way Dan Anderson had—when he told you anything, you always believed it—you could see it all plain right before you.

"'I remember him,' says I. 'Shore I do; but he never come through this way.'

"'O' course not,' says Dan. 'He come in from the south, up the Lander Trail. That's why he ain't knowed very well in this part o' the country. He trades down at Meteetse. Anyway, he's it—he's the remains. It now becomes my painful duty to git said remains back East, an' at once I confront a rapacious corporation which has a monopoly. Ah, well!'

"'Well, sir, he goes in an' he asks for four full tickets to Omaha, for him an'

Willy an' Hank an' me—though we hadn't none of us knowed we was goin' to travel thataway.'

"After that, Dan he looks sad, an' says he to the station agent: 'My friend, I'm sorry to tell you that ole man Jenkins, over on Rock Creek, died a couple o' days ago, an' I am charged with takin' the remains back East with me to-morrow. What are the rules o' the road in sech cases?'

"Sammy Donahue is the station agent—right careless little feller, but good-hearted. He looks over his paper for a while, an' says he: 'Double rates in sech case. Ice extra.'

"'What is that you're tellin' me?' says Dan Anderson, sad an' sorrowful. 'Two rates fer my ole friend, Mr. Jenkins? Sir,' says he, 'do you know that you're bein' guilty o' class legislation?'

"'Best I kin do,' says Sammy. 'Here's what it says on the rate sheet.' An' he points the place right out to us all.

"'I pay this extortionate bill under protest,' says Dan Anderson. 'I want a receipt fer this money, statin' the purpose for which it is extorted.'

"An' while Sam is makin' out the receipt, he writes a telegram tellin' the loved ones at home that their paw has passed away an' will start East on the two-thirty to-morrer. After this, we steps out tiptoe, sorrowful, onto the depot platform. I dunno as I ever felt so sorry in my life as I did for them pore folks back in Pennsylvania, awaitin' for the arrival of the departed. I could jest see ole man Jenkins lyin' there with them little, white side whiskers, an' the mole. O' course, I know now there wasn't no ole man Jenkins at all; but, then, I thought they was.

"Dan takes copies o' all the rate sheets he could find in the depot office, an', when we come up to the passenger car standin' there, he says to me: 'Curly, take a hatchet, an' bust off that metal sign from the door. I need it as more evidence in the case.'

"'Ef I do that, what'll happen to me?' says I.

"'Nothing!' says Dan Anderson.

'There'll be so many other things happen to the railroad in this case that they'll fergit all about their little sign.'

"Well, sir, I done what he told me, an' pretty soon we go over to town again. Hank Skelly he fixes up the dummy box, all right, an' caches it out at the edge of town that night. An' shore enough, next day, jest afore train time, we all come down to the depot with ole man Jenkins in Hank's wagon, an' when the train come in, we all helped put him in the baggage car, no one objectin', because Dan he shows his double ticket.

"'Now,' says Dan, 'the rest of us'll go back an' set down.'

"We kept on a-goin' through the train until we come to the last car, which was the private car o' the president. Him an' the head lawyer was just back from a trip in the mountains. Black man in a white coat at the gate says: 'Yoh cain't come in heah, suh.'

"'Open that door!' was all Dan Anderson said; an' he was that persuasive that the colored person he opened it. Then Dan he goes on in an' motions to the rest of us to come in, too.

"There was two fat men settin' there all by theirselves, smokin'—box o' cigars an' some rye an' seltzer standin' around. Both these people they looks at Dan hard fer a minnit, then the first fat man jumps up an' says. 'Hello, Anderson! That you? How come you out here?'

"'How are you, Hewlett?' says Dan. 'An' you, too, Albright. Glad to see you.'

"'Set down, set down,' says the first fat man, who I learn is the president o' the road. 'Take a cigar—have a drink—won't you—er—your friends have something?'

"I could see right then that the only way to travel is in a private car.

"'No, thank you,' says Dan. 'Fact is, we're here on rather a sad errand. Pore ole Jenkins—all that's left of him is on ahead in the baggage car. You knew Jenkins, didn't you?—Dave Jenkins, of Yale, seventy-four—big iron man—Jenkinsville, Pennsylvania—why,

o' course you knew him. He was one o' your heaviest shippers.'

"'Why, sure,' says the president. 'Knew him right well.'

"'Sure,' says Dan. 'Rather heavy-set man. Gray, with side whiskers—mole on the side o' his face.'

"'Yes, I remember,' says the president. 'Pore ole Jenkins! Is that so? In some accident?'

"'Pneumonia. - Down on Rock Creek, day before yestiddy. He'd come out here for his health. Mighty lucky I happened to be out here. You see, he's a friend o' mine. I've always handled all his legal work for him—general retainer,' says he.

"'That so? I didn't know that.'

"'Yes, sir,' says Dan. 'He's a esteemed client o' mine, too.'

"'That so?' says the president, laughin'. 'You mean he *was* a client.'

"'No, I mean he's my client right now. I got the case o' David Henry Jenkins—D. H. Jenkins—against the P. C. & D. Railroad. O' course, you know I wouldn't take a case that didn't have something in it. I'm so clear as to this one that I entertain hopes, gentlemen,' says he, 'that we kin arrive at a compromise before we git as far as the cut-off on the way to Billings. These friends o' mine here was also friends o' the diseased.'

"'What do you mean, Anderson?' asked fat man number two, reachin' for the rye an' seltzer.

"'Why,' says Dan, crossin' his laigs, 'it looks to me like a gross injustice—a constitutional injustice—has been attempted against my ole friend Dave H. Jenkins.'

"'Now, here we was, all of us settin' right there, about six feet away from them two men that owned this whole railroad—I dunno where they ever got the money to build it—an' Dan he wasn't scared o' them a little bit—ef anything, they was the ones was gettin' scared, though they tried to laugh.

"'Well, ef that's the way you feel about it, Dan,' says the president o' the road—who I reckon knowed Dan right well back East in other cases—I reckon we'll have to try the case right here. I'll

be the court, an' Albright'll appear for us in defense, an' you go on with the prosecution. State your case.'

"'The case,' says Dan Anderson, 'is that o' unjust railroad rates both ways o' the deck an' all hands down the middle.'

"'Come ag'in,' says the court.

"'To begin back a little,' says Dan, fishin' some papers out'n his pocket, 'you've been takin' it away from the folks out here pretty coarse. Now, what I want to ask is: What higher freight rates do you want the government to give you when you already charge eight dollars on two cinch rings an' one latigo strap from Omaha into Sunshine; an' when you ask my son Willy here to pay you a salary fer workin' hard all summer an' shippin' his wool an' hay out over your road, an' his tomatoes an' side beef in, an' baby carriages cost him forty-three dollars an' twenty-nine cents freight from K. C. He may need more. What encouragement has he got?'

"The president he begins to blow up like a balloon. 'Railroads made this country,' says he. 'It'd be a desert without us.'

"'She'll be a desert with you,' says Dan Anderson. 'Take the case o' Hank Skelly here, a plain an' hard-workin' saddle maker, that only wants a fair livin'. Ef saddles has to cost a plain cow-puncher like my frien's here a hundred an' fifty dollars per each, how kin he sell saddles? He's tryin' to build up a factory here an' do some business. Seems like he can't git much of a start with cinch rings costin' him four dollars an' three cents each—the four dollars bein' fer the freight.'

"'Our schedules have been made up only after the utmost care,' says Fat Man Number One, blowing up still wider. 'We can in no case alter such. The tendency of these days is to oppress the pore an' downtrod railroads that is tryin' fer reasons o' kindness to help build up the country. The fact is, as you know, Mr. Anderson, we are before the Interstate Commerce seekin' to have higher rates accorded us. We are just strugglin' along, under a vast

burden o' responsibility, tryin' to save this country an' perpetuate the gov'-ment.'

"'Shore,' says Dan Anderson; 'an' we're all tryin' to keep up with you. I was thinkin' a rate o' fifty cents a barrel on cinch rings f. o. b. Omaha, billed fer Sunshine, would be about right. Under the old rates, a barrel cost, say, thirty-four thousand dollars freight from Omaha to Cody. That's a leetle steep fer Hank.

"'An' on top o' that injustice" says Dan Anderson, gettin' up now an' lookin' stern, 'you refuse to carry a burial party on your train after sellin' tickets. Moreover, an' worse'n that, you charge our friend the remains double rates fer the privilege of travelin' on this train; an' then you won't let him travel.'

"'Thought you said he was in the baggage car,' says Albright, laughin'."

"'He is an' he ain't,' says Dan Anderson. 'He had to be, but he can't be. Which complication,' says he, 'is all along o' your moral turpentine,' says he.

"Both the fat men tried to look at Dan Anderson while they was reachin' out for a drink. Their hands touched on the seltzer bottle, an' they looked at each other.

"'What do you know about *this*?' says Hewlett to Albright. "Is he in earnest?"

"'Albright he can't say nothin'. Dan he lays down on the table the freight rates an' the brass door plate I had taken off the door.

"'Gentlemen,' says he, 'cast your eyes over this evidence.'

"'What about it?' says Albright.

"'A good deal about it,' says Dan Anderson. 'Do you want us to break the windows an' climb in on your ole train? An' ef we did break them an' try to climb in, what'd you do to us?"

"'Plenty,' says Albright.

"'You would, eh? Well, it's plenty I'm goin' to do to you. Here's tickets that we bought entitlin' us to ride on this train. Here's a ticket that ought to carry two remains on this train. But—such is the intimate relations o' goose an' gander in this here case,' says he—'you ferbid us to come on your train

without committin' trespass, an' willful trespass. You take our money, agreein' to allow us for to accomplish a purpose, an' then you won't let us accomplish that purpose. Moreover, you make a unconstitutional discrimination against us. This,' says Dan Anderson, 'after your chargin' us thirty-four thousand three hunderd dollars an' twenty-eight cents freight on two hunderd pounds o' cinch rings, is like what the wronged woman says in the play: "It's too, too much."

"'But here I set,' says he after a while, 'talkin' with you, while like as not the ice is meltin' up there on my ole friend, D. Henry Jenkins. It wouldn't surprise me none ef you charged five dollars a hunderd for this kind o' ice, instead of twenty cents.'

"'Hold on, now, Dan,' says Fat Man Number One. 'Let's git this thing straight.'

"'There ain't nothin' straight about it,' says Dan.

"'Well, you paid for your ticket, an' you're here, ain't you—you got on the train?"

"'By committin' trespass after bein' warned, yes,' says Dan Anderson. 'But look what chances we took. Your sign says keep off the grass strictly. We are not permitted on the steps, er platform, er any mail, baggage, er express car. We couldn't git in through the window, and we're obliged to be on the steps er on the platform so's to get inside—there's) the proof o' your own statement in abidin' bronze, my friend, there on the table.'

"'By golly,' says Fat Man Number Two, 'we'll have to fix this up! He's got a tecknercality on us.'

"'It's too late to fix it up,' says Dan, severe like. 'Now, here's the evidence, an' it's the best possible evidence obtainable in the case, as the court will admit—this here doorplate o' yours, which I'll interjuce as Exhibit A. As to the class discrimination regardin' my friend, D. Henry Jenkins, I want to ask you kin I bring his remains in here on your private car?"

"'Great heavens, no!' says the president.

"Kin I carry him in the dinin' car, or the buffay car, er the observation car?"

"Certainly not."

"Er the Pullman car, er the chair car?"

"That's absurd."

"Er the day coach, er the smokin' car?"

"Not none whatever, of course," says the president.

"Then which way," asks Dan Anderson, 'is the pore man, in them sad circumstances, to turn? Bein' ferbid all the train—not even allowed to set in the libr'ry car, er the barber shop—he runs against this brass sign which says he can't git on the steps er on the platform, ner in any mail er baggage er express car. Gentlemen, I ask you where could he go? Yet he's paid you double fare, an' I got the receipt fer it!"

"I've never thought of it thataway," says Albright, scratchin' his head."

"There's a heap o' things you never thought of," says Dan Anderson, still severe. "The least thing you can do after chargin' a man double is to give him some kind o' a show fer his white alley, fer ef you don't, you're subject to the law regulatin' common carriers, o' course. But you fergit that law."

"Now, as a common carrier, you can't discriminate legal between persons desirin' to ride on your trains, not unless they're intoxicated, er guilty o' disorderly conduct—neither o' which things is the case here. You knew ole man Jenkins well. He wasn't a drinkin' man, an' when he was alive he was right quiet. Now he's *plumb* quiet—you shore can't call him disorderly in no sense o' the word. Yet them is the kind o' people you *are* discriminatin' against in this here road. Gentlemen, it was never the original intention o' this government to play favorites in no such way. Do you now begin to see, gentlemen, where you are at in this case?"

"Well, sir, they both rolled back in their chairs, an' they laffed till they was tired. Dan Anderson was *plumb* solemn."

"My friends," says he, 'you fergit that I am handlin' the case of a warm

personal friend. I don't like no such levity as this. I've a notion to stop the train an' put the *corpus delicti* right off in the sagebrush. Pore ole Jenkins! Seems like he ain't got no place to go. O' course, in such case considerable damages would lie against this road. Gentlemen, shall I pull the bell cord an' stop the train? If we have to trespass to git on your train after buyin' tickets, you can't blame us fer filin' a damage suit ef we git put off the train; now, can you?"

"Well, I will say, Anderson you always had your own way o' handlin' a case," says Albright.

"My way o' handlin' this case," says Dan Anderson, 'is simply with the purpose o' showin' you the relations o' trade an' transportation. You've bin treatin' *all* the folks in this country like they couldn't help themselves. My friend, such was not the intention under the Constitution o' these United States, an' it can't last. Such also is not the way to build up a saddle factory, ner a railroad, ner anythin' else. Moreover, ef my son here goes broke in the ranchin' business—an' no one can tell how many folks he will have to feed in years to come—why, I got to go behind him an' pay the bills. In which case I have to charge my clients more—sayin' you was my clients, I'd have to charge you more."

"Curly," says Dan to me, while we're settin' lookin' at him, 'go on forward an' see ef the diseased needs any lookin' after."

"I goes out reverent, on tiptoes, but I stops behind the door for to laugh a few."

"Boys," I heard Dan Anderson goin' on to them two fat parties. 'I used to think it was all right to take it away from them that hasn't an' them that can't. Sometimes as I git older, an' as the country gits older—I begin to wonder where all this progress is goin' to land us at. Ain't it enough fer a feller to come out here an' go against this country, seekin' to change it from hell to alfalfa, without sendin' back fer money from home every sixty days? Why don't you give the folks a chanct,

fellers? Fer instance, why don't you make Hank Skelly here a decent rate on cinch rings f. o. b. Omaha? Ef you don't, my friends, I swear I will take up in the courts the question o' whether two cinch rings an' one latigo strap weighs two hunderd pounds. Maybe, too, we'll say a thing about trespassin', an' that sort o' thing, aboundin' an' abuttin' on railroad trains.'

"They both set an' looked at Dan a while, I reckon. At last I hears Fat Man Number One say: 'Dan, you're a wonder! Mebbe you're right a little bit, anyhow. We'll fix this thing up.'

"I knowed you would,' says Dan, calm an' pleasant. 'You needn't mind about that ice, Curly.' You see, he knew some way I was waitin' behind the door.

"Well, sir, them folks pulled their chairs up around the table then, an' we all had a little rye an' seltzer an' a cigar or so around, an' then we begin to regulate freight rates.

"Them fellers are right speedy when it come down to things o' that kind, an' we hadn't gone as far as the cut-off when they pushed back their chairs, an' all seemed satisfied. Hank an' me, that had been carin' for the rye an' seltzer, we also was satisfied. Willy he sits an' grins at his dad, admirin' him, an' he was satisfied. For a funeral party, I dunno I ever seen everybody any more satisfied.

"Oh, by the way, Curly,' says Dan Anderson to me at last, 'you needn't mind about anything, but jest only to go up an' git the baggageman to open the door, an' you push ole man Jenkins off in the sagebrush.'

"Great heavens, man!' says Albright, 'what do you mean? Haven't we done everything in the world you asked us to do?'

"You shore have,' says Dan.

"An' yet you want to make us liable for damages? Besides, it's a outrage to treat remains in that way.'

"No, it ain't,' says Dan. 'Not these

remains. The outrage was to charge ole man Jenkins two fares, like you was a set o' city shark undertakers. But now, in fact, gentlemen, our dear friend, Mr. D. H. Jenkins, Yale, seventy-four, who we all know so well, ain't nothin' more by this time than a little hay an' some pieces o' rock. It seems to me now,' says he, 'that the drinks is on the house legitimate.'

"They was some chastened, I reckon, an' looked sad for a while, an' then they laughed.

"You see,' says Dan Anderson, uncrossin' his laigs at last, 'in all this tit-for-tat business, public an' corporations, that sort o' thing, you know, best sort o' way in the world is to have a object lesson. You've got to have blocks an' pictures fer people like railroad presidents an' counsels. Figgers is no good. The best bill of rights is a six-shooter an' a rope, anyhow. I don't believe in finin' a corporation, nohow—always lynch the president first—it's cheaper, an' a heap better. That is, unless said president can understand sign talk an' read the pictures on his blocks.'

"Well, by golly, Dan, it looks that way,' said Albright, an' they all shook hands. Hank an' me by this time was almost down to the bottom of the rye, so we shook hands, too.

"Sometimes when I'm over to Hank's saddle factory, Hank an' me wonder yet where them fellers got them cigars—they didn't taste like any we'd ever smoked before.

"Besides, maybe them brass collars—presidents an' counsels an' that sort—ain't so bad when you come to know 'em. Come time when Willy Anderson he has two more twins down at his house next spring after these things I'm tellin' you about—an' along come the finest double-seat baby kerridge you ever saw. I dunno who paid the freight on it, but it had a card tied on the handle that was marked 'D. H.' Them ain't Willy's initials—but, come to think of it, them's old man Jenkins' initials!"

In the first December POPULAR, on sale November 7th, Emerson Hough tells about Curly's encounter with "The Landscape Company Limited."

The Man Who Couldn't Play Football

By Daniel Steele

Author of "The Good Man's Double," "The Twist of a Screw," Etc.

Even if you don't know the first thing about formations or tackles or interference we know you will enjoy this remarkable football story. It came as a surprise to us, for we did not know that the author of "The Good Man's Double" and other great mystery tales could turn out so graphic a story of football. We have read a great many football stories, some of them interesting and splendidly told, but none of them gave us quite the thrill of this one. It is as exciting as if one sat—or stood—in the stands at a big game and was part and parcel of the seething excitement. And there is a real story in it too. Don't skip it.

A RUNABOUT slid up the dusty hill, and came to a stop beside a high board fence. Its occupants—a girl and a young man—stepped out, and, leaving the car, went through a gateway under a massed section of crossbeams, and out into the sunny glare of the football field. They strolled around in the alleyway back of the goal posts, and down in front of the west stand, where Dolly Ward, with the air of one accustomed to admiring glances and attention, fluttered up the aisle to a point of vantage opposite the forty-yard line. Emerson Webster, red-haired and immaculate, followed, and proceeded to chat with her as the two languidly watched the struggle that had begun on the gridiron.

Fall practice was under way. On the field a handful of coaches, screaming like a flock of crows, hovered over the scrimmages as the "Varsity" hammered the ball down into "College" territory, and pecked remorselessly at weary linemen and ragged backs. Thirty-seven thousand empty seats, relieved only by a mere color spot of half a hundred mildly enthusiastic spectators, rose tier upon tier in unresponsive bleakness. Like prison walls, they looked down

upon the toiling figures in blue against a background of sunburned grass. Here and there a once-blue jersey added a note of fading green to the ensemble and marked the veteran player, with his superstitious preference for the old as long as its shreds held together. The warm haze of the Indian summer was in the air.

"Oh, look!"

Emerson turned quickly in the middle of some laughing sally, and followed the direction of Dolly's gaze, to see a half back skirting the Varsity's left end for five, ten, twenty-five yards. "Oh, isn't that splendid!" she cried, as the flying back was finally brought to earth by a tackle, and the lagging players, followed by frantic coaches, closed in around him, while the stamp of approval rattled on the bleachers.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Fred Williams, third substitute half. End on the freshman last year. But he couldn't get away like that later in the season when the tackling gets sharper," Emerson answered, with sophomoric authority.

"He rooms with Terry Sloane, doesn't he?"

"Yes. Terry told me the other day

that Fred thinks they are going to have trouble with the back field this year. They're all slow. They've even thought of drafting some of the hundred and two-twenty men from the track, but that's been tried before. A sprinter pure and simple can't play football, you know; he gets broken up, and goes to pieces."

Dolly received this display of inside information with a look of deep comprehension which fully covered any possible vagueness on her part. "By the way," she asked, "are you going to the Sloanes' for dinner before the Everetts' dance?"

"Yes. Are you? Great!"

"Oh, is that Art Morgan punting? No, over there."

"Yes. They say he's making a wonderful captain."

The scrimmages had been halted, and now a squad of punters and another of catchers were being drilled. The steady *boom, boom* as one ball after another rose high in the air and settled again into waiting arms mingled with the quick interchanged shouts of each pair of catchers:

"It's mine!"

"Take it!"

The man who caught always ran up behind his partner, or, if he fumbled, dove after the ball. Emerson amused himself by calculating the varying distances covered by the punts.

"Don't you ever play football?"

Dolly's question roused him from his momentary abstraction. "I!" he laughed. "Not a chance!"

Indeed, it was perfectly evident to look at Emerson Webster that he would have no chance. From an athletic point of view, he was not, to put it mildly, an impressive sight. It was not so much a matter of detail—narrow shoulders and so on—as the fact that his general appearance failed to convey any abiding sense of physical toughness.

To a similar question from a class-mate, Emerson might have answered a brief "Hell, no!" without wincing; but there was something in Dolly's wide-

eyed look of innocence that left him uneasy and a little resentful. He didn't propose to be "kidded" by a girl, and so he relapsed into silence, and studied the practice again.

"I should think you would do *something*. I know you could."

There was a note, if not of sympathy, at least of sincerity in her voice this time. He glanced sideways, and took in a wisp of blond hair that was lifted by a tiny breeze and strayed across her cheek; the perfume of the gardenia she wore came to him. He forgave her.

"Well, I'll tell you, Dolly," he said. "I haven't any chance for the big things like the crew and football, and the other things bore you so. The most obvious thing to do, of course, is to get out and 'heel' something, the way every one does. But what good does it do you to waste four years of college in killing yourself for the sake of a system? I suppose, for instance, I might slave for two years, running errands, as Terry Sloane does, and make the *News*. But I hate to be obvious. All the rest—the minor athletics, the literary and musical stunts—are just a labyrinth of littleness—a maelstrom of—of——"

He paused in his satirical description, trying to think of a word.

"You ought to write that out," laughed Dolly.

But Emerson, with the perfume of the gardenia still borne to him on the warm breeze, looked out again at the field below. Dolly's question, and his answer to it, had started a train of thought.

Emerson came honestly by the right to think. His father was a professor of mathematics, who was better known abroad among scholars than in the narrow confines of the Middle Western college in which he taught graduate courses. Yet Emerson was only vaguely aware of his father's gifts. He knew him as an unimposing man, absorbed in a daily round of uninspiring duties, who rarely came in contact with his own family circle. Only a few times had he approached intimacy with his father. Once was in the fall after his

graduation from a fashionable prep school.

"I am sending you to college," his father had said—"though it is much changed there since my day—to learn to think, and to get a sense of values."

He had often wondered since why his father had said just that.

To begin with, no one could look at Emerson's high forehead under his red locks, his clear eyes, long nose, and slightly retreating chin, and not see that the boy was, if anything, in danger of thinking too much. As to his sense of values, the nonchalant attitude toward life that he had imbibed at school still clung to him in spite of the maelstrom of activity—to use his own word—which freshman year, and now the commencement of sophomore year, in the big Eastern university had opened.

Emerson's sole surrender to the *Zeitgeist* had occurred in the early part of freshman year. He had strolled in, unprepared, and sat down in company with a score of pale-faced grinds competing in examination for the Bailey Latin Prize. Emerson had received the prize. It was the only time he had ever "done anything." And he had since been popularly regarded as one of those gifted creatures who never open a book, and who are much admired in consequence, as though such abstinence were cause for admiration. For the rest, Mory's, with its mugs of ale, claimed him much less than the particular kind of dissipation known as "fussing," which latter revolved around Dolly Ward as a center.

And so he sat there beside her and reviewed his year and two weeks at college, wondering vaguely what it all meant, and why the deuce a fellow couldn't get along, even with a girl, unless he wore the badge of toil.

It is one thing to sit, immaculate, on the bleachers with a very attractive girl, and look down upon the distant blue figures moving on the field below; and it is quite another thing, as you are helping the same girl into an automobile, and they loom above you, on the run to their trolley car after the practice, to feel her attention wander from

you. Somehow, one's immaculateness seems less desirable when one gets the rude vitality of the near presence of these towering creatures. Their faces streaked with dirt, their nervous swing of the arms, their fierce negligence of gait, and complete look of fighters suggest the heroes and battles of Romance.

Dolly gave a little gasp of surprise as one of them brushed her in passing. He turned to shout back a command to those following. His round, boyish face, set on a tall, lithe body, was already marked with lines of care under the dirt. His hands, torn and bleeding, and bound up with grimy electric tape, juggled a couple of footballs, and his eyes blazed like coals. For a moment he gazed into and past Emerson, as unconscious of him as though the latter were some dull piece of furniture, and then he swung around, and was gone.

"That's Art Morgan, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Emerson. He cranked the car, got in beside Dolly, his polished number seven boot slowly let in the clutch, and they shot ahead in silence.

It was three weeks later that Emerson's roommate stamped up to the second floor of Durfee, and came unceremoniously upon Emerson, writing at a desk.

"Hello, Web!" he remarked. "I thought you didn't believe in work?"

"I'm writing a portfolio for the *Lit*," said Emerson.

"Rather late to begin heeling the *Lit*, isn't it?" He came and leaned heavily upon Emerson's shoulder. "'Athletics and the Obvious,'" he read. "Huh! You don't expect the board to pass anything like that, do you? Put that up. Aren't you coming to the mass meeting?"

"What mass meeting?" asked Emerson vaguely.

Twenty minutes later he stood jammed in a crowd, listening to a speech. The speaker, with that peculiar flow of eloquence that is possessed only by distinguished graduates back on their native heath, was urging the college to come to the support of the team. He recounted the dire straits into which,

now, with the season half over, the team had fallen. The no-score game against a very weak opponent was the theme of his talk. And he declaimed, as though no one had ever thought of it before, that they were all back of the team as one man.

When he had finished, it occurred to Emerson that all this kind of thing had been done before. It was the same old story. And he even felt a note of sham and self-deception running through that undergraduate enthusiasm, which seemed to his immature sophistication to bubble forth in a stereotyped pattern, as though everything had been reduced to ritual—the very savage enthusiasm of a man must adapt itself to a given number of sounds. Jammed as he was in the crowd, he felt a sense of both mental and physical compression.

And then Captain Morgan rose on the platform. Beside the older men who had preceded him, he looked a patient-faced boy. He was, in fact, scarcely a year or two older than Emerson. He faltered at first in the face of the hush that greeted his appearance, and then found his voice because he had to.

"Fellows," he began, "it's just as Mr. Root says. The rules are changed this year, and it is a hard task to try out things; and we are shy of weight this year, and want all the big men to come out for the line." He paused a moment. "There isn't much that I can say. We are doing the best we can out there at the field, but we need your help—every one of you—in every possible way."

It wasn't a very clever speech. In fact, it was a poor one. Some one sprang up and called for a long cheer for Art Morgan. It broke electrically on the silence. And now the fact that they were cheering for the man himself, the fact that he could command in that way the reverence of his essentially irreverent fellows, suddenly found its way to Emerson. Perhaps there was something real in it, after all. And, without knowing why, a lump came in his throat as he joined in the cheer.

After dinner Emerson pondered whether it was too soon to call on Dolly again, and finally compromised by telephoning to her house. Ticket applications for the final big game were already out, and it was necessary to ask her about some minor arrangements, as the engagement to go to the game together was one of long standing. Also, he could at least hear her voice.

"Oh, Emerson!" came back the sweet voice over the wire. "You know, Terry Sloane has asked me to go with him. I have been to so many games with you. You don't mind, do you?"

"Not at all," said Emerson, and snapped the receiver back on the hook so quickly that his roommate asked: "What's up now?"

Emerson laughed grimly, and his mouth shut in a small line. "Nothing much. Let's go down to Mory's," he said, pulling his cap viciously over his eyes.

Nor did he join the ranks which, as a result of the mass meeting, paraded next day to the field behind a brass band to cheer the team. Emerson Webster had become a misanthrope when with that snap of the receiver back on the hook he had marked the unworthy exit of Dolly Ward from his scheme of things, and, with his roommate's tactfully uninquisitive company, sought the consolation of Mory's.

• A week went by.

One afternoon as the team was lined up for the usual practice, "Pop" Allen, playing defensive tackle in the Varsity line, jammed his elbow into the neck of Bill Jones, who faced him on the College. Jones struggled valiantly in the fraction of a second that is allowed for such things, felt himself going, and flung his body across Pop Allen's shins, but vainly, for the veteran Varsity tackle was through the line clean. In the next fraction of a second, Pop had picked up a featherweight College half back in something the way that the iron arm on the flying mail car picks off the mail bag strung up on a post at a way station.

The result of this entire proceeding,

transpiring as it did in about a second and a half, though taking much longer to describe, was a loss of six yards for the College eleven. The next thing that happened was that on hitting the ground the College half dropped the ball, and his own quarter had to dive for it for a loss of two yards more.

No one thought of praising Pop Allen, but the head coach, with the look of a man upon whom rests the duty of never missing a detail, ran up, and expressed himself in a few well-chosen words equally divided between Bill Jones, who had let his man through, and the little runner, who had dropped the ball; at the conclusion of his remarks he called out another back from the side lines, and incontinently dismissed the unfortunate runner from the field.

The little half back, who had fumbled, had sat up, dazed for a moment. He now staggered to his feet, and limped away to the side lines. He was wearing a new headguard, and his red hair straggled out under it, while blood streamed down his face and over his chest from his thin nose.

It was Emerson Webster.

As Pop Allen cheerfully remarked afterward to Bill Jones, as they sat side by side, dressing, upon a wooden bench in the gymnasium: "Billy, it's no place for that little red-haired kid with the thin face. I hope I didn't half kill him. He felt like a child when I tackled him that time."

Billy Jones laughed. "He'll quit after to-day, of course," he said. "There are a lot of dubs on the College that sometimes make me think I'm a football player. Say, Pop, kick over that shoe, will you? What'd you think of the practice to-day?"

"Slow and rotten, as usual," answered the Varsity man.

That evening a doctor climbed to the second floor of Durfee, and told Emerson that his nose wasn't broken, and that he had a slight extravasation of water on the knee, which could best be cured by absolute rest.

"Well!" sighed Emerson's roommate after the doctor had gone. "I suppose

you have a right to go out and get shot to pieces if you want to, but you're too much for me!"

For a week Emerson Webster stayed in bed and thought. It is altogether doubtful that Professor Edwin Webster, Ph. D., LL. D., who had sent his son East to college to "think and to get a sense of values," had the remotest idea of the exact way in which that much desired process was working itself out. Perhaps, too, it was fortunate for Emerson that he should have been beyond parental inspection at that particular time.

To begin with, his sense of values had been shaken up. Why this particular mass meeting rather than some other similar event should have to be recorded as the turning point is a subjective problem we shall not attempt to solve. Objectively there was the picture of the football captain speaking on the campus—a relatively commonplace event; and yet it came to him as a vision of a man with courage enough in him to attempt even the things for which he was not fitted. And so, feeling more than thinking along that line, Emerson of a sudden became aware that he had burst from the old formula "What good will it do me?" and found his views bedecked in a new one "What good will it do?" There was nothing new, of course, in Emerson's realization of altruism, but it seemed to him entirely fresh.

In the fine frenzy of it, he had dared.

Unheeding the jeers of his roommate and the laughter of his friends, he had gone out for the team, had offered himself a living sacrifice on the altar of his Alma Mater. They needed flesh and blood to try their plays on. Very good. The only thing that worried him was that he wasn't good enough even for that. A turn of the wheel had picked him out from among twoscore candidates for the back field, and had seemed to show him just how useless he was. But that phase had passed. He could look back on it and realize that his experience had been broadened. For he knew now what it was like to be on the inside of a football scrimmage, and

in fast company, at that. It was a memory that would last. It was as vivid, as real almost, though in a different way, as the clustering memories of Dolly Ward that twined round him in his loneliness in spite of his efforts to drive them away.

As he sat thus in bed, joylessly thinking, he reverted to the semioccasional function of writing home. After a severe mental effort, he managed to force himself to the honesty of confessing in his letter that he had gone out for football; but he suppressed the fact of his injury, and trembled at the effect the news would have upon his father. He concluded by asking for a check. In a few days the check came, but there was no mention of the football. Perhaps it had not been taken in.

At the end of a week, thanks to the most painstaking inactivity, Emerson's knee had entirely healed, and he was at recitations again. And at this point his roommate's ideas on the Conventions of the Universe had another shaking up.

It happened in this wise: One morning after the first recitation, unconvinced, but yielding to moral pressure, his roommate accompanied Emerson to the lot back of the gymnasium, and, donning a sweater, assisted him in passing to and fro a discarded Varsity football. "I might want to try again next fall," was the only explanation Emerson vouchsafed. To outsiders entering or leaving the "gym" at that early hour, it simply looked like a little exercise; but there was one fact to which his roommate had been sworn to secrecy.

The football was greased.

Emerson had been thinking, among other things, of that fumbled ball; and this, with other similar mornings to follow, was the Demosthenesian pebbled result of his thought.

But that was not all. It was now the first week in November. The early-season grind was over; the team was made up, and, under the amalgamated care of many coaches, trainers, and rubbers, it was rounding into shape. One afternoon Emerson Webster, having cut a recitation in Latin prose, appeared in football togs on the side-line

bench, a dot of blue in the army of substitutes; and his roommate, from across the field, up in the east stand, knew not what to make of this new madness.

It was too late, of course, to expect to be put in a scrimmage, and about all that came to him was a chance to watch the secret practice and a daily run in from the field. He was beginning to lose what little flesh he had under this latter ordeal when all at once the running stopped, and he simply sat day after day, and did nothing.

Then the unexpected happened. A visiting coach, mistaking Emerson for some one else, put him in at half back on the College. Here he managed, with his newly acquired wind, to last through a number of scrimmages, especially as nothing took place but an interchange of kicks. At length, as the College full back kicked again, the all too-frequent accident occurred. The punt was blocked. A heavy Varsity guard seized it, and stared down the field. Emerson had turned on hearing the click and quick-following thud which means a blocked ball, and was off in pursuit. It was fifty yards to the goal line, and the big guard had a start of seven or eight yards. At the twenty-yard line Emerson's thin arms had glued themselves about the guard's waist, and the big man kept on for another yard or two, and then tripped in his stride, and fell headlong.

"Lord! That boy can run! Who is he? Why, he closed in on him as though he was standing still!" was the surprised cry of a coach who had arrived on the field that afternoon for the first time in the season.

The head coach, from the vantage point of a season's experience and knowledge, answered him calmly sotto voce: "I'm afraid the guard's an ice wagon; that's all,"—he said.

But Emerson, with the blood again streaming from his nose, where it had been rubbed over the rough edge of the guard's leather belt, smiled happily as the practice ended.

At the club that evening the head coach sat crouched in a deep leather

chair, bending meditatively over a glass with a straw in it. He was listening to the discussion of half a dozen other old players, and was saying nothing himself. It was a highly technical discussion, and was carried on in a spirit of unconsciously vivid earnestness.

Several of the older men were upholding the merits of the line-plunging game. They had been out of college long enough to have altered their perspective to include other things than football, and yet to look at them one would have supposed that a meeting to decide the fate of nations was in progress.

Occasionally one of them would solemnly stoop over and run across the room, upsetting a couple of chairs in illustration of his idea. Young and old when they spoke used vicious gestures. It seemed impossible to speak of a simple matter like breaking through the line without actually demolishing some imaginary opposition, often at the risk of upsetting sundry tall glasses on the table.

"I tell you," said the coach who had put Emerson in the scrub line-up, and who now had forgotten all about it, "when you get into the game nowadays, God help you! Under this ten-yards-in-three-downs rule, there's nothing to it but line up and kick, line up and kick, and pray the other side will fumble first." He was a man of forty odd years, with gray hair on his temples, and he spoke and looked as much in earnest as though he was addressing an appellate court on a grave matter.

"You might try that old eleven-six fake-kick formation, and get a good man around the end from there," another suggested, placing himself, by way of illustration, behind two chairs, and then kicking one aside.

"No," interposed one of the younger men. "You've got your opposing end here"—he went over and jabbed the arm of the sofa—"and the opposing end is presumably as fast as your half back."

"Yes, and sometimes faster," added another. "You forget we've got to take

into account Johnny Sands, all-America end last year. He can beat out any man *we've* got behind the line or in it."

"But the play I mean," resumed the first speaker, unruffled by his younger dissenters, "is the one Brink Thorne used back in ninety-five."

The head coach looked up and smiled. "We haven't any Brink Thorne on the team this year," he remarked quietly. Then he stared thoughtfully at the carpet, and looked up again. "Say, fellows, let's go down to Mory's. I haven't been inside there twice this year."

As for Emerson, he had no reason to regret, on the whole, now it was over, his brief participation in football. It meant that he was witnessing the rest of the season from the side lines, and should the team win he would be present at the banquet, and hear the speeches. That much was almost an achievement in itself. He was, too, seeing really a great deal of the inside of football, and it opened up to him vistas of understanding which even the most thoughtful observer would miss from the bleachers. At close range, the whole thing assumed bigger proportions and a different perspective.

For instance, he understood now why the guard played outside his man on defense, often at the risk of letting the play through center for a good gain; and he also knew how many men were sent through as possible catchers of a forward pass in addition to the actual one at whom it was aimed, and just where they started from. And he had found out during the last days of the season a little bit of the science of football, and wherein lay its simplicity. Many of the complex things he had observed from the outside had turned out to be very simple, and vice versa. Also, he knew the signals.

And at last he was on the side-line bench on the great day of the final big game—albeit, the least resembling a football player of all those who wore suits and made up the long, thin line of substitutes.

Football lovers believe that their game is sport raised to its highest

power. All the keen delight in the pitting of skill against skill, all the centuries-developed inherited love of fighting for a cause, wells up in the hearts of the great crowds that go to see the big contests.

The great day was at hand. It was very different from that afternoon of practice Emerson had watched beside Dolly Ward. Thirty-seven thousand seats, overflowing now with humanity, rose tier upon tier in a perspective dotted with color and alive with noise. From their mountainous sides rolled down the rivers of organized cheers. They broke upon the inclosed valley below, an oblong of green marked by fresh white lines, whereon in fearsome loneliness were the two groups of devoted heroes in faded blue and dull, worn crimson. Driven like perfect machines in preliminary signal practice, the rival elevens slipped up and down the field before the crackling voices of the quarter-backs. The cold breath of November was in the air.

Emerson glanced up, and a chill of delight took possession of him. He drew his sweater close around his neck, and blew upon his fingers. The roaring storm of cheers from the enemy across the field smote his ears like thunder, and he smiled grimly. Never had a big game seemed so real to him; never had its least accompaniment seemed so vital.

After the preliminary practice, the toss of the coin, the taking position, the whistle started the game off. Emerson's heart came up in his throat after the very first caught ball, the first tackle, and stayed there. How important was that first play—how vital was every inch of ground! He knew, too, with the sympathy of personal experience, just how that ball felt as it landed in the arms of a little, crimson-limbed runner; and he had a brief, impersonal fellow feeling for him as he saw Pop Allen, with a beautiful tackle, bring him down, and, at one and the same time, the thousands behind him to their feet in a burst of acclaim.

And so, huddled up, and squeezed between others on the low wooden

bench, Emerson sat through the long afternoon, as, minute after minute, under a never-ceasing storm of cheers, the great game played itself out, and the sky grew overcast, and the wind blew colder.

The head coach, with set face, prom-enaded up and down, keeping his eyes always on the play. The first quarter had opened with a mishap—a fumble had lost the ball to the crimson team on the twenty-five-yard line. In the midst of a hush so profound that the rasping of canvas jersey and moleskin could be heard as the lines clashed, a crimson six-footer, with provoking coolness, and from under the very feet of the charging figure in blue, had lifted the ball over the crossbar, and sent a chilling three up on the score board, and the enemy wild with joy.

But after that nothing happened save that the tide of battle ebbed and flowed; and the end of the fourth quarter found the two teams still at each other's throats, worn, but game, having fought each other to what, with the exception of the first minute, would have been a no-score tie.

The timekeeper had given notice of the last five minutes, and the end was approaching. As though in mutual recognition of this, and by way of testing their resources to the utmost, man after man now began to be substituted on each team.

But the character of the game remained the same, and finally crystallized into a punting duel after skill and strategy had done all it could to test every link in the other's defense.

Watch in hand now, the head coach of the blue team stood and eyed the little black line under the glass creeping inexorably to the end of the last minute of the last day of all the row of days and nights throughout which he had thought and toiled.

There he stood, glancing up sharply to follow every punt and catch, every blocked tackler, trying not to think of the days when he himself had been out there fighting instead of chained helplessly to the side lines—stood and prayed now for a fumble. While be-

hind him, undismayed and stout-hearted cheer leaders kept up their swaying control of the great-volumed cheers that showed that defeat could not alter loyalty.

In the midst of it came a breathing spell. Time was taken out for an injured blue-clad player. He lay upon the ground, and then he was carried, weeping, off to the side lines—Fred Williams, the last good half back to go in!

And then a sudden image flashed across the mind of the head coach, upon whose shoulders still rested the duty of knowing every detail, of preparing for every thinkable possibility. The image was one of a thin-legged, red-haired half back overtaking a lumbering guard. The picture somehow fitted into the intricate tracing that the present stage of the struggle made upon his brain. He turned, and his eye swept the line of substitutes behind him, and he beckoned to Emerson Webster.

At the same time one of the coaches sprang up from the bench, and ran to the head coach in angry altercation.

The head coach flushed as he answered him. "Jack," he said nervously, and his voice shook, but his eyes held steadily, "there is about a minute, or maybe only thirty seconds, left. I'm taking a chance in a million."

With a shove, he sent Emerson spinning out on the field. Emerson, as one in a dream, had yanked off his sweater, and, without knowing why or how, he sped out. A chill enveloped his cramped and shaking limbs, and his mind, numbed with long and anxious watching, could not seem to understand or realize anything.

He was dimly aware that Captain Morgan was walking out to meet him. Instead of the towering hero whom Emerson remembered at the beginning of the season, looking at him as if he didn't exist, what he saw now was a very tired boy, with a drawn and bleeding face, and appealing eyes that looked down into his as he flung an arm over Emerson's shoulder and spoke to him.

Almost before he knew it, the whistle blew, and the game was on. Emerson

was still in a daze. All the scene, the noise, the vast crowd had vanished, and he saw before him just a rush line, and beyond it another rush line, heard the signal for a kick, sprang into kicking formation, and saw a huge, crimson-jerseyed figure sailing toward him. A paralyzing fear overtook him as he braced himself to block. Lord! How much it all meant—just this one play! He almost screamed in terror as he dove at the man's ankles, missed them, and felt the shock of falling on the ground.

But he heard the boom of the ball. It was off safely. His man hadn't blocked it, after all. And as he picked himself up and scurried off some quiet power inside him seemed to assert itself. This was not so very different, after all, from the practice. It even seemed easier. He felt a curious sense of calm now, almost of carelessness, and a sort of detached interest in the great game so nearly over, and in the unheard-of miracle that he was in it. And with the reaction he began to think.

The crimson team, victory in their grasp, punted back on the next play, and on the following line-up on his own fifteen-yard line, Emerson heard the signal 10—11—6—21.

"Eleven-six!" he muttered, under his breath.

He sprang into position at left half back. At the same time, out of the corner of his eye, he saw the time-keeper step gingerly out from the side line. It might be the last play of the game!

The ball came back direct from center as he crossed over, but the pass was poor, and he had to slow down suddenly to get it.

In some way his supernaturally active brain had expected a poor pass, and he was ready for it. It struck his outstretched left hand, it stayed there, and was gathered into his arms. Was it the greased football he had learned to hold that now gave him a sureness of touch that meant everything?

He looked, and saw his interference

far ahead of him. The delay of a fraction of a second had cost him his position in the play by fully two yards, and so he started to make it up, if he could, with a sensation of crimson figures impending like the crest of a wave from beyond the blue rush line. He had not heard the gasp that had gone up at the crooked pass.

The head coach watched him. "It's a chance—it's a chance!" he muttered; and then fright crept into his eyes. "Why doesn't he turn in?" For Emerson, who knew a little football consciously, and knew none by instinct, had fallen into the trap of the ordinary green half back, and, instead of cutting through an obvious opening at tackle that gaped momentarily beside Pop Allen, was swinging wide out, all alone, for the end—Johnny Sands' end! The head coach looked at his watch, groaned, and turned his back in agony. It was all over.

Suddenly, like a clap of thunder on the still, electrified air, the head coach heard from above and around him the crisp bellow of spontaneous acclaim. He swung around, unbelieving, and saw that the miracle had happened, as miracles do happen in football. Sands, the all-America end, was prone, and still sliding along the ground, and just beyond his outstretched hands swung the little red-haired runner. He was almost over to the side line when he curved down, and, like a breath of wind, fanned the head coach as he passed.

Heading for him diagonally at full speed was a crimson back and Captain Morgan. The blue-shirted captain cast himself unsparingly before the crimson player's knees, and the two dropped together, and rolled in unnoticed elimination at the feet of the head coach. But Emerson needed no interference now. Not a man on either team could have closed up the gap. Like a fleeting shadow, he spun along past a wild mob of substitutes and old graduates on the side line. But Emerson himself saw nothing save that lonely goal post and crossbar ahead of him that seemed as though it would never

get any nearer, till suddenly he was under and behind it.

Just then all sorts of strange things began to happen in many places. It would be difficult to record a small fraction of them. Down on the side line the angry coach who had a moment before protested at Emerson's going into the game struck the head coach a staggering blow in the chest, and then proceeded to embrace him in a transport of joy. The entire side line became a strip of dancing dervishes as the roar from twenty thousand throats drowned the organized cheering and everything else like a tidal wave.

In the midst of this vast upheaval, away up in a certain row and section opposite the five-yard line, several men somewhat advanced in years were standing on their seats, and acting as though they desired above all things the destruction of each other's coat collars.

"Did you see him run!" cried one of them, in a voice from which all timbre had long since departed. He put his tear-stained face close to his neighbor so as to be heard. "It's Neddy Webster's boy," he half sobbed. "Yes, it is. I tell you, I know the boy. You remember, Neddy won the race for us back in sixty-five? It's his boy. Chip of the old block! *Did you see him run?*" He asked this question again, as though he dared one of all the forty thousand spectators not to have seen it. His voice trailed off into incoherence, and then utter speechlessness.

As for Emerson Webster himself, once he surrendered the ball for the try at goal that added another point to his five, and made the score six to three, and a victory, he was in a dream. And he only came to when he was being carried off the field on the shoulders of some one he did not know, and caught sight of his roommate, fighting for a chance to help, and getting tossed aside.

The gridiron, covered with a swirling crowd, swam before his eyes. He looked down. Just to the right, still standing in the half-emptied bleachers, he saw Dolly Ward. Terry Sloane was beside her. Her face was pale and

wide-eyed in a strange expression. It passed in a second from his vision, and he recalled her as a far-off, indifferent memory of something that was not real.

Around him swirled the crowd, frantic with joy. It seemed ages to him that he had to sit above that sea of heads and shoulders, and hear his name shouted as he was rushed along. Several times he nearly fell off. At his left the snake dance had already begun. The long ranks of dancing men surged between the goal posts, tossing their caps over the crossbar like spray from

a fountain. Other ranks were forming.

Emerson caught sight, in the midst of it all, of a number of middle-aged men, arms over each other's shoulders, shouting like boys. Awkwardly clinging to them, and trying to keep step, was a hatless, gray-headed man with a grin of childish delight on his face.

It was his father!

He tried in that instant to catch his eye. He shouted and waved frantically, but he was borne out and away under the massed section of crossbeams, and through the gateway in the board fence.



THE BIGGEST STATE IN THE UNION

COLONEL LOUIS J. WORTHAM, who edits the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* and gets his recreation by bragging about Texas, tells the following story to illustrate the bigness of his State:

A resident of Brownsville, which is in the extreme southern part of Texas, had never in the forty years of his life been away from home, but, finally reaching the state of affluence which enabled him to hand money to a railroad ticket agent, he made a trip to Fort Worth, in the northern part of the State.

Upon his return home, a friend of his asked him:

"Where in the world have you been, Bill?"

"I," replied Bill, "have been away up North."

"Up North?" the friend asked.

"Yes, I've been all the way to Fort Worth," said Bill, with some degree of pride.

"How did you like it up there?" was the next question.

"Oh," replied Bill, "it was all right, but I don't care much for those darn Yankees."



FLUBDUB IN A FOREIGN TONGUE

W. J. SHOWALTER made a trip through Venezuela not long ago and made such a hit with the government that he was given a decoration, which consisted of a large amount of foreign language on a generous amount of paper, and a gold medal to be hung on a red ribbon around his swanlike neck. The only trouble about all this honor was that Showalter could not read the glowing things said about him in the manuscript. Consequently he took it to his friend, Frederic J. Haskin, with the request that it be translated for him.

"Why," said Haskin, grasping Showalter by the hand, "this is a great and magnificent honor which has been thrust upon you. I congratulate you. This sets forth that you have been made a member of the High and Ancient Order of the Bounding Bull."

Showalter smiled faintly and admitted that he had never heard of this particular band of knights, and later he confessed his belief that the brotherhood was too obscure for him to hang its insignia across his enameled evening-shirt front. It was two months later that he discovered that he had been made a member of the Order of Bolivar, old man Bolivar having been a grand working combination of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt.

Dirk Memling Proves Himself Pfiffig

By Rupert Hughes

Author of "The Very Grand Piano Robbery," "The Great Cinematographic Crime," Etc.

The ingenious Memling, art lover and purloiner of statues and grand pianos, gets his great idea, which has for object the enrichment of his native land with masterpieces in spite of itself, and incidentally the enrichment of himself and his capable assistant, Nellie. Like the old German whom he takes into his confidence, Dirk proves himself *pfiffig*. To quote Nellie, "Ain't that woid a peach!"

THIS was before Dirk Memling and his model, Nellie, made the first of their attempts to climb up out of the pit they had digged for themselves. This was in the full moon of that period when Memling was turning his genius for sculpture into the subtleties of theft—or, as "Slinky" put it, "usin' his chisel for a jimmy."

One afternoon when he was in no mood for small talk, and the cigarettes were all gone, and he was too lazy to go out for more, Nellie left him, and wandered up the stairs of the old studio building, knocking at various doors. But everybody seemed to be from home, and she had no answer till she pounded on the door of gruff old Fritz Sternberg.

He answered: "Go away, pleass—dammit!"

So she walked in.

Fritz had long ago given up painting his early Munich landscapes, which Memling described as "nature seen through a glass of beer." Being unable to sell new paintings of his own, he had drifted into restoring old paintings by other people. He had a knack for it, and by working incessantly managed to keep himself in kraut and ciga-

rettes. Nellie found him frantically cleansing an ancient canvas.

"What are you doing, Mr. Stoin-boig?" said Nellie. "It's none of my biz, o' course, and don't tell me if you don't want to, but what on oith are you doing? You're not rubbing out a painting, are you?"

"Foolishness kvestion noommer two t'ousand and twoty-two," snapped the old man, who read the *Evening Mail*. "No, I am not rubbing a painting owit; I am making a laundrying of my socks."

"Oh, pardon me!" said Nellie. "Much obliged for the inflammation. Au re-voyer!"

"Make the door to chently ven you go owit," said Sternberg.

Nellie stared at him with mingled wrath and amusement.

"Well, since you're so oigent about it, Fritzzy, I will sit down," she said, and proceeded to stand at his elbow.

"Don't fill up the light, pleass," said Sternberg, giving her a shove. "Do you think you are a lamp?"

"Well, of all the old Joiman hospitality!" said Nellie, moving round to the other side. "It looks like good woik to me, except for the dame's general lack of duds. What ails the pitcher?"

"Yes," said Sternberg, and went on scrubbing.

"Now she's doin' the vanishin' act like she was a magician's helper. I was a medium once. Yes, I was!" This statement evoked no response, even when she added "Honesttogawd," so she shrugged her shoulders jauntily, and said: "Well, if you insist, I'll tell you all about it. Thoity years ago I was but a prattlin' babe, when I was swiped from me solid-gold cradle by a dress suit that would commit moider for a cigaroot, and—— Say, for the love of Mike! There's another pitcher under that one! What is it—a landscape, or a cowscape?"

"Yes," said Fritz.

"Maybe it's a bit of still life?"

"I vish you are a still lifer, dammit!"

"Oh, you do know a coupla other voids besides yes, don't you?"

"No!"

She bent closer, her pretty face so near to his that her hair tickled his nose, and he sneezed.

"Vill you pleass take that hair of yours owit of my face, and go home mit yourself?"

"Soitan'y not, Fritzzy. A coupla soitan'y nots. You got me int'rested, and—oh, I see it now! It's a coupla cows standin' in a pond and chewin' near-mint gum, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, what on oith do you wanta rub out a beautiful dame, all dressed up in her own figure, for, when what's left is on'y a coupla tons of beef dressed in cowhide?"

"Yes."

"Say, Fritzzy, is this the old Heidelboig way a poifect gempman treats a poifect lady? I ast you a polite question, and I expect a civic answer, and if I don't get it, I'll——"

She buttonholed him, and swung him round. His eyes blazed at her from a shag of hair and beard.

"Hello! *Was zum Teufel!*"

"Say, I'm not talkin' on the long-distance phone, you know; I'm right with you."

"I see you, but vat ails you?"

"I was astin' you why you was rubbin' that gorgeous nymf' off the slate when all there is underneath her is a pair of cattle?"

"Because the nymf' was painted by some poor Kleckser, and the kettle were painted by Paul Potter."

"Paul Potter—the play writer that made Trilbies famous? Since when was he a paintist?"

"This Mr. Potter was a Dutchman who flourished——"

"A flourishing Dutchman!"

"He flourished two hunnerd feefty years back, and he was a great chenius."

"Well, what's the use of flourishin' two hunderd and fifty years back? I'd rather be the Mr. Paul Potter that's flourishin' now."

"Well, since you have no possibility to be eeder of the famous Herren Potter, vill you pleass go home once, and mind your own verdammte beezness?"

"Watch out now, Fritzzy, or you'll insult me in a minute, and if you dare I'll—say, that's comin' out wonderful, ain't it?"

"Vill you keep your hair my eyes owit?"

"Why, soitamin'y! Say, how'd you like my hair this way? It's the latest—à la mud, from Paresis."

"Oh, *geh zum Henker*, Nellie! My nice, sweet Nellie, pleass go chump in the ocean!"

"Well, don't push me, whatever you do! I'm goin' as fast as I can. Say, just look at that! Those cows are comin' out of nothin'—sumpum like the way I saw a negative developed once in a dark room. That artist wasn't so anxious to throw me out as you are, Fritzzy. Fact is, I had to threaten to bat him over the head with his own red lamp before he'd leave me go at all. Those photographers are awful devils, some of 'em. Did you ever notice that?"

Old Sternberg put down his materials with a wild glare of apoplexy, went to the door, and howled down the stairs:

"Memlink! Oh, Memlink! Oh, Memli-ink!"

Soon a voice came faintly from below:

"Well, what's the matter?"

"Come up here once, vill you, right away, kavick?"

The tone of distress in his voice brought Memling hurrying up the stairs to the rescue. He came in panting and anxious.

"What's the matter, Fritz? *Was ist los?*"

"One of your models is loose, and she strayed in here. Take her away, and put handcuffs on her feet. I gotta vork, and she's gotta talk. You could silence her as easy as Niackary Falls."

Nellie winked at Memling, and said:

"The fact is, Doik, this old villain loored me in here, and won't let me go; he has been makin' vil'ent love to me."

If wrath could have exploded Fritz Sternberg, he would have gone through the skylight like a rocket. He began to send out German appeals to the devil, the hangman, the heavens, the weather; he pulled hair and whiskers with both hands. Memling tried to quiet him and explain that Nellie was never to be taken literally. But Fritz stormed on:

"*Hilf Gott!* Now I got two of 'em!" And: "De lock is broke on de door. Go home, pleass! I gotta restore this picture. I can't leaf it."

Memling put up his hand.

"Go right on; don't mind us."

"If I could get that fat policeman up so high as this, I bet I'd have some solitood here."

Memling put his arm around the old sputterer, led him to his work, and flattered him back to joviality till he was chuckling:

"Dat Nellie, she beats me! Ven she can't think of anythink else to say, she puts her face down on my vork and tickles my nose till I'll be rubbing it two weeks more yet, and won't rub the tickles owit."

Nellie had to explain the wonderful work Fritz was doing, and she got it all wrong, about the lady who was being evicted from the canvas to make room for a flock of cows.

At the name of Paul Potter, Memling grew excited. Like most sculptors, Memling painted a little for diversion, and to express the color and back-

ground he was denied in marble. Paul Potter was one of his gods, of course.

"How in Heaven did they suspect that there was an old master like him under the daub?"

"Nobody suspected it. It was me found it. They vant this lady's portrait restoret. She was peelink off a little, the lady; and they esk me to touch up the paint."

"Every lady's got to be repainted once in so often," said Nellie; but Fritz ignored her.

"Underneat' the corner I find the sicknatoor of Paul Potter. It makes me such an excitement I cannot help peelink more yet."

"But how did a Paul Potter ever get painted over?"

"You see, some smearer of a fellow who doesn't know who Paul Potter is, vat a greatness he's got, he needs a canvas. He just takes this, and don't stop to scrape off the cows. He just paints a lining over it, and slaps on this *erschrecklich* study in the nood."

"Study in the noodle!" said Memling indignantly. "It's a sacrilege, that's what it is! But isn't it absolutely ruined? Do you think you can remove the daub without removing the Paul Potter, too?"

"Can I? How could I be doing it if I couldn't do it?"

"That's wonderful—you're wonderful!"

"You don't have to tell me. I know I'm wonderful. I am very *pfiiffig*."

"Come again," said Nellie. "You're very what?"

Fritz blustered: "*Pfiiffig*, I said!"

"Do it again for Mr. Memling. Listen once, Doik! Stand over here a little out of the way. Now say it again."

Fritz roared: "I said it twice—*pfiiffig*—*pfiiffig*!"

"Ain't that woid a peach, Doik? I gotta use that—*pfiiffikkh*. Oh, I tell you the fella that wrote the Joiman language musta handed himself a good laugh—*pfiiffikkh*! It's so convenient, too, when you got a cold or hay fever. You can clear your throat, and go right on talkin'. Go on, Fritz, you're all to the *pfiiffikkh*."

But Memling was serious.

"How do you remove paint from paint, Fritz? Is it a secret process?"

"Not very. It's pooblished in some books, but those books is not best sellers yet. Over there is a book or two—— Can you read the French lengvitch?"

Nellie flared up:

"Can he read the French langwidge? Why, he wrote it!"

Memling consulted a few volumes dumped in a corner.

"May I borrow these?"

"Do I get 'em back?"

"I said 'borrow.'"

"Dot's vat they all say!"

"Oh, I'm very eccentric. I return what I borrow."

"Get out vit 'em."

"I'm not robbing you?"

"Me! I know all dose books has, and lots more besides."

"I'll take these three. Much obliged. Good-by."

"I'll be much obligeder if you take Nellie mit."

"No, thanks, Fritz, I can't stay," Nellie burred. "Just as much obliged, but I can't stop. Oh, don't think of making tea. Aw revoyer!"

She slipped out just as Fritz threw one of his shoes at her. As it clumped against the door, she said: "Nice old Joiman, Fritz!"

But Memling's eyes were so deep in the books that Nellie had to take his arm to keep him from stepping off into space.

"Watch out, Doik; you'll shoot the chutes in a minute. Whattaya wanta read books like them for? They got no more plot than a time-table."

Memling answered:

"I've got one of the greatest ideas of modern times, Nellie."

"Is that all?"

"Come in and sit down while I tell you about it—in a few words."

"In a few woids? Good-by to my hopes of bein' took to dinner! I'm in for a talk Marathon. But wait a minute—sumpum tells me I forgot sumpum. What was it I went up to Fritz's for? I'll go ast him."

"Better take this Zulu shield."

"Oh, I remember! It was cig'rets! We're all out of cig'rets, ain't you? And I started up to rob Fritz. He always has 'em, because he can't smoke 'em till he quits woik. Whilst I was there I got so int'rested in watchin' him currycomb that dame I forgot the cig'rets. I tell you, art is an absorbin' thing, ain't it, Doik?"

But Memling was absorbed in the books. And Nellie lightly ascended the stairs once more, buoyed up by the vision of the fury of Fritz when he saw her again. The vision did not disappoint her.

Even Memling heard him bellow. When Nellie came back she was triumphant.

"What did you say to poor Fritz?" said Memling.

"I pushed the door open, and I says: 'Mr. Stoinboig, it is my stoin duty to inform you that I cannot be your wife. I was greatly comp'mented by your proposal, but I love A Nother.' When I got that far, he was comin' after me with a palette knife, so I says: 'Fritz, for the love of moissy, gimme a cig'-ret!' And he slung the box at me. It's a tin box, and kind o' sharp where it hit, but it didn't come open, so I brang it along. When I left, I hoid him pil-in' chairs and tables against the door. I guess I'll go up and tell old *pfiffikh* he'd better dress for dinner right away if he's goin' to take me to the opera."

"Let him alone! You'll stay here and listen to me. I've got an idea—it's the very——"

"I know; the greatest in the history of the woi!'. Go on—'pit it out in mamma's hand."

II.

Memling was well used to Nellie's flippancies, and knew well that they were but the little frothy ripples over a deep sea of devotion. He waited patiently in his big chair till she snuggled herself among a multitude of cushions on the divan and lighted his cigarette for him, and hers for herself, and found ash trays, and asked if there was a draft on him, and wouldn't he rather

sit in the other chair, or would he have a cushion behind his back, and would he like a cuppa tea before he began to orate.

Finally she settled back, and said:

"All right; Mrs. Audience is here. Rise the coitain!"

Then he began:

"Many of the greatest inventions, Nellie, have been inspired by accidents. Great inventors are apt to be men who observe accidents and utilize them."

"You'll obsoive a naccident if you don't can that 'cyclopedia stuff, and slip it to me in woids of one syllabus or less."

"Well, what I started to say was: I got an idea from what we saw up at Fritz Sternberg's studio. Now, what did we see there? We saw a——"

"You ast yourself a question, and then you answer. You're polite to yourself, ain't you?"

"Shut up, Nellie, dear. We saw a masterpiece by a great painter painted over by a small painter. The masterpiece is brought to this country, and never suspected, never examined, till by chance the painting is sent to be cleaned of its accumulations of soot and dirt, and by accident a bit of the upper painting is chipped off, and reveals the signature on the lower painting."

"And the lower painting is higher art than the upper painting."

"Don't trifle, Nellie. Now, does not all this suggest something to you?"

"Yes, indeedy!"

"What does it suggest?"

"It sudjects that I'm ready to go to dinner whenever you are."

"Now, let us utilize this accident, set the force running the other way. What a stupid painter did through ignorance, and the stupid old Fritz upstairs did through accident, let us apply by invention."

"Say, Doik, a goil can't live on big woids, you know. I'll trade you all you're goin' to say for the privilege of losin' myself in a platter of Guffanti's spaghet'. That's the study in still life I like. Say, Doik, when I die, and you sculp me me monument, just have a

nonyx pedestal upholdin' a big, immense plate of spaghetti, and write on it in Latin: 'She never could get enough of it till now.' I bet spaghetti would look fine in marble, wouldn't it? And it would drape nice around the column."

"If you don't keep quiet, you'll need a monument. You get nothing to eat till I tell you my scheme."

"I won't say a woid. Not a sound will I make. As for spaghetti, I spoine the very idear of it."

Memling was still eloquent in spite of her distractions:

"Listen, Nellie! You know that the demand for foreign paintings is tremendous in this country. It swamps the native artist so that he has to have a tariff wall to keep him from drowning completely. Works of art are charged a high duty. In the case of high-priced painters, this adds enormously to their cost. It limits their market just so far, and forces people of moderate means to buy home-grown paintings. And that, of course, is why it is maintained."

"Nevertheless, there is so big a market for foreigners that smuggling is always going on to get their works in free. It used to be easy to bribe an official, till the government started in to try to get honesty by bribing, too—offering so much for exposing smugglers that the smugglers themselves couldn't afford to raise the ante. There was one firm that had to refund about a million dollars of unpaid duties."

"Now, of course, it's possible to smuggle, and get help, and it always will be; but it's too dangerous to be a substantial business proposition. But suppose I went across the ocean——"

"Oh, Doik, don't tell me you're going to leave me!"

"Hush! Of course not—how could I? Suppose we went over there, and came back with about fifty great masterpieces neatly painted over with other paintings?"

"Well, wouldn't you have to pay duty on the other paintings, as well as on the other paintings that's underneath the—er—other paintings—— Say, unwind me, can't you?"

"No; and that's the glorious part of my scheme."

"You goin' to bribe the whole U. S. customhouse?"

"Not at all."

"You goin' to steal the customhouse and slip 'em through surreptitious?"

"Not at all—though that's not a bad idea for the future. To steal the U. S. customhouse! That would be interesting!"

"One thing at a time, Doik. You're goin' to steal all the old masters—yes, and then——"

"But I'm not going to steal any old masters. I'm going to buy new masters."

"Poor boy! The heat has went to your medulla obligato!"

"At least, I'm going to get somebody else to buy them for me, and then I'm going to paint other pictures over them, and come back to America, and tell the customs officers that I'm an American citizen, and I've been studying abroad, and these are some of my sketches and pictures rejected at the salons; and they'll look them over and see how bad they are, and say 'Welcome home, little prodigal! Go right back to your papa, and ask him to give you a job in his cheese factory.' And I'll enter the country and vanish, and——"

"And get old Fritz Stoinboig to scrub your woik off the woik of the other fellows, and then you'll sell the other fellas for all they'll bring."

"You have it to perfection, except that I shall not have Fritz Sternberg do the restoring. In the first place, he is too honest to approach."

"How do you know he's so honest?"

"Because, with all his knowledge of faking antiques and touching up chromos, and cleaning off real works of art, he is still poor."

"Bein' poor is no proof of bein' honest, Doik. You know that some of the woist crooks on oith don't know where the next meal's comin' from. I'll talk to Fritz if you want. He'd do anything for me."

"No, I'll not approach Fritz; because, if he's honest, he will denounce me to

the authorities, and, if he's dishonest, he'll want a big share of the proceeds."

"But you don't know how to restore a pitcher."

"I didn't, but I do. This little book tells all about it. It's so simple a child could understand it. Listen. I'll read you a sample from this book. It's by Charles Dalbon, and it's called '*Traité Technique et Raisonné de la Restauration des Tableaux*.'"

Nellie rolled her eyes wildly. "Oh, how sweet! Did you say restaurant and tableaux? I've got a beautiful tableau in mind of me eating about a million yards of spaghetti. Do I get it?"

"Listen. I'll translate a little of it as I go along." And he read it off as follows:

"In wishing to execute the de-varnishing of an ancient picture, the practician perspicacious well often perceives himself that the said picture has been outrageously repainted formerly by a restorator unskillful or improvised, who not knowing to reaccord the original tones or not wishing to give himself the pain, has found nothing better to do than repaint it in part.

"In the presence of a picture thus maltreated; there is not to hesitate. One ought without any fear to make disappear the *couche odieuse* which in much of cases recovers a color primitive charming and not having no need but of light retouches.

"Is that clear, Nellie?"

"Clear as mud! Say, do you like spaghetti better au gratin, or ar l' Italienny? Or what do you like best on it?"

"A mixture of alcohol and of essence of turpentine——"

"Toipentine on spaghetti! Oh, Doik, what are you saying?"

"I'm reading, and will you please omit that spaghetti?"

"That's what I'm doing, Doik. I'm omitting it hard."

"Listen, will you?" And he threw her a glare that almost impressed her.

"A mixture of alcohol and of essence of turpentine, in letting dominate the first liquid, is all indicated to uplift the repaints. If the color is tenacious and hard, the alcohol pure could be employed and the usage of the scraper would sometimes be necessary to the accomplishment of the work. The force of the mixture will be enfeebled step by step in proportion as one approaches

the original color, in order that no alteration of that produce itself.

"Are you listening, Nellie?"

"I'm listening just as I did when I hoid Sara Boinhardt play 'La Toscar.' I listened so hard I sprained both ears, but I couldn't understand anything but the gestures, and I was unsoitain about a lotta them."

Memling waved for silence, and prepared to read on, but she waved back.

"If you're going to restore anything, restore me quick, for I'm fading away." She rose, closed the book in spite of him, brought his hat, set it on his head, and dragged him away, saying: "Leave those old masters be, and take care of this young missus."

But all through the supper he was thinking over his campaign, and whispering his schemes across the table to Nellie, who was more interested in pursuing the evasive spaghetti round and round her fork.

"While you're inventin' so much, Doik, you'd oughta patent a way for taming spaghetti so's a poifect lady could take her cargo aboard without ruining the appetite of everybody with-in sight."

"There's millions in it, Nellie," said Memling earnestly.

"Do you think so?" she exclaimed joyously. "Millions in a spaghetti spear?"

He glowered.

"I'm speaking of my great smuggling scheme."

"I suppose," she retorted, "that, being an American citizen, your first ambition would naturally be to beat the gov'ment out of sumpum."

"Naturally. But I'm thinking more of the educational aspect. By enriching our native land with masterpieces in spite of itself, we shall be accomplishing a great achievement in the history of——"

"There you go as per usual," Nellie gasped. "You're always slippin' a little hypodoinic injection into your conscience. I bet if you stole the candy off a baby, you'd say it was for the educational value of the baby and to save it from future misery in its tum."

"Well, be that as it may, doesn't the idea of an ocean voyage stir you up?"

"I'm afraid it will. You see, Doik, I never cross on the ferry to Joisey City on a rough day without sufferin' from—well, it would be a case of nightmare all night and mal de mare all day."

"But think of the reward—think of the money we'll make!"

"Maybe—and, then again, maybe not. But it seems t' me that we're sailin' a long distance to borrry trouble, when there's such a plenty of it right near our reach. And sumpum seems to whisper in my year that we'll come home in the steerage, or ridin' on the trucks underneath the ship."

III.

Everything graceful, beautiful, and lovable on earth seems to have its ugly under side, as every useful thing has its abuseful phase. And the mirror of art devoted to revealing the world its own charms or its own truths has its dull quicksilver surface, where dust and microbes gather and flourish.

There seems never to have been a time when tricksters have not taken advantage of mankind's love of glass beads or diamonds, or statues or paintings, or antique what-nots. Among all the ancient line of æsthetical crooks, Max Strubel was hardly surpassed in instinct for what was good art, and for what was a good imitation of what was good art.

There were countless other financial paths he might have followed, many of which would have yielded him greater profits for less work and less risk, both of purse and of liberty.

Horse-racing would have been far more exciting, without greater risk; and counterfeiting would have been far more profitable, without greater danger.

But Strubel preferred to deal with painters and sculptors, and to deal with them crookedly. It was to Strubel that Memling had gone when he kidnaped the inartistic statue of the old Revolutionary general, changed the marble to

a nymph, and found he could not sell the statue. It was Strubel that stained it and palmed it off as an antique. And when Memling emptied old Millionaire Van Veen's summer home in the great cinematographic robbery, it was to Strubel that he looked for the sale of the loot.

Strubel had failed Memling that time, and his confederates—"Slinky" Green, "Gold-tooth" Leshner, and "Short-arm" Clary—had wanted to burn his shop over his lying head for him; but Memling had realized that Strubel was merely suffering from a natural fright at the idea of marketing the works of art stolen from a prominent millionaire.

It was to Strubel that Memling prepared to turn now. He broached the plan as he and Nellie strolled back to his studio after dinner. Nellie was in a mood of spaghetti beatitude, but she found energy enough to oppose the idea of Strubel bitterly. She had never forgiven him for playing the yellow quitter, and leaving them to be ruined by the too great success of their cinematographic crime.

"But whom else have we to go to, Nellie, dear?" Memling pleaded patiently, for he had an almost superstitious respect for Nellie's intuitions.

"Why've we gotta gotta anybody?" she answered. "You wouldn't take old Fritzzy into the laundry work on your canvases for fear he'd want part of the money, and yet you're gona take Strubel in. And you know that he lets you do all the work, and all he asks is all the money. That fella gets everything there is in anything out of it like he was a vacuum cleaner."

Memling's reply was: "I repeat, Nellie, who else is there to go to? We need a stack of money a mile high. Our steamer's fare has to be found, and our living expenses in Paris for six months or more, and the market price of a lot of paintings, and our fare back to America."

"And you expect Strubel to make a cough like that? What do you think he is—Camille?"

"He'd cough his head off if he

thought he could sell it. Especially if he thought he could sell it as somebody else's head—an ancient Greek, for instance."

But Nellie sniffed:

"Max Strubel's head would never be mistaken for ancient Greek."

The upshot of the debate was that Nellie could suggest no substitute, and she told Memling to send for him, but contented herself with a reservation:

"Mark my woids, Doik, in the foist place, he'll never send us abroad; and, in the second place, after he does, he'll never bring us back; and, in the thoid place, when we're back, he'll not market your pitchers; and when he does, we won't see a cent of what he gets for 'em."

"Admitting all that, we'll at least get to Paris."

"I'll believe Paris when I see it. Go on and telephone your Strubel. But make him come to you if you expect to get anything out of him, and take a high hand, or he'll send you over in the steerage, and check me at the old ladies' home."

Strubel answered the telephone in person. He suggested that Memling call at his office the next day. He could not possibly see Memling to-night, for he was going to the opera with some rich art fanciers. But when Memling calmly said he would not trouble Strubel, but would consult one or two other big dealers he knew, Strubel said he would come over at once in a taxicab.

Before the slow street car ever reached Memling's corner, Strubel had evidently realized that he was being led by the nose, and that he had lost the first move in whatever game was to be played. He entered Memling's studio in a grim humor, as much as to say:

"I'm here, but I left my pocketbook at home."

Memling and Nellie had been frantically discussing the best means of attack on the wily Strubel, and they were at loggerheads when he rang.

"I'll do a disappear, and retain anonymous," said Nellie as she fled.

Before he answered the bell, Memling called up Slinky Green at a pool

room he haunted, and, in a low voice, told him to ring Memling's number in half an hour, and permit himself to be talked to; then, ten minutes later, to ring again; and again in five minutes.

Then he dawdled to the door, and admitted the anxious Strubel, greeting him with a friendly yawn.

"Sorry to drag you down here, Strubel, when the opera is so much pleasanter than the song I have to sing."

"And is not so expensive," interpolated Strubel.

"Oh, no, indeed! You could have a box for several seasons on what my project will cost. But, as I was saying, I shouldn't have dreamed of dragging you down here if certain rivals of yours were not so impatient to close. But I said it wouldn't be fair till I had consulted you. I didn't give them your name, of course, any more than I'd give you theirs. There should be honor even among—artists and art dealers, Strubie."

Strubel eyed Memling with the suspicious and anxious stare of the traditional bird charmed by the snake. He was fascinated and tempted in spite of his instinctive tendency to disbelieve everything. But it is impossible to disbelieve everything, for disbelief in one thing implies faith in its contradiction—and Memling was always full of contradictions.

Memling urged Strubel to drop into a chair and have one of Fritz's cigarettes. Strubel declined to put himself even under the obligation of smoke. He produced a burly cigar of his own—one that was meant to inspire terror. It suggested a policeman's club, and as he talked it swung up and down in his teeth like a baton.

He draped one eyelid halfway over one eye, and, seizing his cigar violently with his teeth, emitted a growl that meant: "Go on."

Memling looked him over scornfully, and said:

"Not a bit like it, Strubie. You look like a cheap vaudeville actor's imitation of Napoleon or Czolgosz. You know that the only way a dub like you can make money is to invest it in some-

thing that real brains think up. The one kindness a poor genius can do a rich man is to show him a new way to spend a lot of money with a chance of getting some of it back. Now, I'm going to offer you such a chance, because I owe you a grudge and you owe me an apology. So I'm going to give you a chance to support Nellie and me in Paris or thereabouts for, perhaps, a year, and intrust me with a heap of money besides. You won't take the chance, but later, when you're kicking your fat self all over town, just hand yourself a couple of good swift kicks for me, and imagine me saying: 'Well, I gave you your chance.'"

Strubel brandished his cigar threateningly.

"Get to it! Get to it! What's it all about?"

Memling gave him a scenario of the plot as he had sketched it to Nellie. He added:

"And incidentally, while I'm over there, I might steal a number of great ancient masterpieces, paint them over, smuggle them through, and later you can sell them to some private collectors who will keep them in the dark."

"They beat you to the Mona Lisa," Strubel grunted.

"Yes, and it's a shame. Maybe some of those everlasting copyists—always hiding the best pictures in the Louvre, painted her over, and carried her off as a copy of the adjoining picture. Maybe some private owner is gloating over his ill-gotten treasure now. I might steal you a couple of Raphaels and a Velasquez or two."

Strubel answered: "Not for me; it's dishonest."

Memling smiled. "What a rotten actor you are, Strubie!"

Strubel almost dared to get actually angry, but he substituted ridicule:

"All you want me to do is to keep you and Nellie in comfort till you get tired, and then it's up to me to sell the pictures you steal."

"Naturally. Don't you like the scheme?"

"I like it so well that I'll give you the easy end of it. You stay here and

scrape up the expenses, and I'll go over and be art student, and bring back my studies."

Memling's look was still more frankly scornful.

"Strubel, you know that if you ever appeared at the customs, and claimed to be an artist, a laugh would go up that would swing the Brooklyn Bridge off its hinges. They'd get diamonds out of you if they had to use a stomach pump. You look less like an artist than anybody on earth. Pardon me a minute; the telephone is ringing."

Memling went to the telephone, and when Slinky's voice sneaked across the wire: "Hello, guv'nor; here I am!" Memling spoke to him as if he were a firm of importers:

"Hello, Mr.—er—I recognize your voice, of course. Yes, he's here; he came all the way from White Plains to try to get the chance to back my scheme. Well, I haven't told him your offer yet, and if he doesn't raise your bet I'll certainly give you the first chance. You might call up later."

Memling hung up the receiver, and winked at Strubel.

"Pardon my taking you in vain. Of course, I know you won't pay any price for the scheme, and I'm just trying to boost the other fellow."

"How do you know I won't back it? How much does the other firm offer?"

Memling gave him so high a figure that he almost rolled to the floor.

He told a hundred reasons why the scheme was futile, and Memling knew he had him. When Slinky called up again, Memling announced to the imaginary dealer that he thought he'd have to take his figure, as his other friend would not go so high.

Strubel broke in with wild gestures that Memling ignored. When he hung up again, Strubel said:

"Those fellers got no mazuma. I'll back you, but I won't send Nellie."

"Oh, yès, you will," Nellie said, coming frankly forth from the eaves where she was eavesdropping.

"For why shoul't I sent you?" Strubel demanded.

"Because Doik will have to have a

model, anyway, and I'm not goin' to let him paint those French ladies. In the second place, Doik needs a noisse—or somebody to take care of him. In the thoid place, I'm goin', anyway."

Strubel refused to give down, and Nellie refused to give up. At the height of the deadlock, the faithful Slinky rang the telephone again, and Memling was just consenting to close the deal with him when Strubel threw up his hands, and assented to pay Nellie's expenses also, and a salary as "noisse," and hoped that the boat would sink with her.

Then Memling graciously commanded Strubel to get the steamer tickets, insisted on the best or none, and bade him good night.

After an unusual amount of flurry and frenzy of preparation, Memling and Nellie found themselves actually on the ship, and the ship about to sail. Both were happy as children—he because he was to see Europe again, she because she was to see it at last. The idea of safety from the overhanging menace of arrest for some of their earlier thefts was like ozone to their souls."

And then Nellie's finger nails nipped Memling's arm till he yowled. Gold-tooth Lesher was coming up the gang-plank. He saw them, and spread them a glittering smile.

The gaudy pattern of his clothes, his ostentatious prosperity, and his over-bubbling joviality promised them humiliation enough; but there was a grave danger in his company.

"If he goes on the same boat with us I'll jump overboard!" Nellie stormed. "He's got a tongue as long and as loose as the ocean. He gave us away once before, and the first day out he'll 'a' told everybody on board everything he knows."

"But what can we do?" Memling wailed. "I can't throw him off."

Nellie thought fiercely. Then:

"I gotta idea that's simpluh supoib! Loor him ashore, and lose him."

"How? I'm not much of a lurer."

"Offer him a drink at one of those gilded saloons on the water front."

"But there's a café on board."

"Tell him it's a temperance boat. He'll believe you. Tell him you for-gotta lay in a stock of wettables."

"But suppose I get left, too?"

"You can't get left. Just show him a saloon, and he'll go to it. Then you cut and run."

"All right. But it's taking a desperate chance."

"If he's left on this boat we won't have a chance—even a desprute one."

Gold-tooth had reached them now, and he overwhelmed them with his effusion. He explained his presence proudly, and with much evidence of the importance of teeth in articulation.

"I'm on my way to Franshe," he said. "All good horshe-rashing is did in Franshe now. In America the horshe is a dead dog—dead by aet of legish-lasher. I'm goin' to Franshe to follow the rashes. Don't know a word of Franshe language, but I can undershtan' language of horshe's hind legs as good as anybody. What you sho shour about, guvnor?"

Nellie gave the reason: "He's just found out that this boat is a prohibition boat. No drinks served for seven days."

"Oh, Gawd!" Gold-tooth groaned. "And I ain't got sho mush as a flashk."

"Mr. Memling was just going ashore to lay in a little private stock," Nellie murmured.

"Lay in enough for me," Gold-tooth pleaded.

"I'm afraid I couldn't carry that much," Memling suggested.

"Better go with him," Nellie hinted.

"Exshellent idea!" averred Gold-tooth, and he took Memling's arm. Nellie's triumph was somewhat marred by her view of the desperate grip Gold-tooth kept on Memling's elbow.

Seeing that Gold-tooth had left his hand luggage at her feet, she got a steward to set them ashore. Then she went to her own stateroom to see what a stateroom looked like.

The bugles and the cries of "All ashore that's going ashore!" came faintly to her. She was watching through a porthole for Memling's return. She could catch only a glimpse of feet hurrying up and down the gangplank. She hoped that two of those were his.

As she went back to the upper deck, there was a sense of motion under her feet. She wondered where Memling was. Looking for her, no doubt, as she for him. She cast her eyes in a farewell gaze over the masses of heads and blurring faces. Down in the heart of the great pier she saw a man moving. It was Memling. The tenacious Gold-tooth Lasher had been too much for him.

Memling, frantically running to the various openings of the pier, and finally to the platform outside, kept shouting something to the frantic Nellie. But the clamor of whistles, tugs, and cheers blotted it out.

She ran to the various officers, all of them very busy and brusque. One of them at last spared her the time to tell her that she could go back on the boat that dropped the pilot.

Memling, in a ferocious frame of mind, with self-disgust and alarm for Nellie, raged and yelled; then turned back, wondering what to do. He would send her a wireless that he would take the next steamer, and she was to wait for him at the Grand Hotel in Cherbourg.

He went to find when the next steamer sailed. He was told that the fastest boat of a rival line left the same morning. He might make it if he had luck. Rejoicing to think that he would beat Nellie across, and be on the dock to greet her, he would not pause to send her a wireless. That could wait till he was safely aboard.

He got aboard just before the gangplank came ashore. At almost the same moment Nellie was shuddering down a flopping ladder to a bobbing pilot boat on her way back to New York.

"The Angel on the Front Cloud" is the title of the next bit of comedy exploiting Dirk and Nellie. You will get it in the first December *POPULAR*, on sale two weeks hence, November 7th.

Precious Water

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "The Boss of Wind River," "The Winning Game," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

The Western Airline Railway absorbs the Prairie Southern and secures thereby a large land grant in the foothills. Cromwell York, president of the W. A., decides to put the land on the market. To make it available a big irrigation plant is installed, ditches and dams to be filled from the Coldstream. But the Coldstream is being used by other ranchers adjoining—who when they learn that York will require almost the entire normal flow of the river for his project, protest through one of their number, Casey Dunne. York gives Dunne no satisfaction, although admitting that if the railroad takes the water the other farms will go dry and their owners ruined. Casey refuses York's offer to buy him out. A year before this Casey has been held up in a transcontinental flyer and befriended a young woman in the same car. He meets her again at the home of mutual friends, the Wades, and learns that she is Clyde Burnaby, niece of James C. Hess, of the celebrated Hess Railway System. Dunne returns to the ranch and calling a meeting at Donald McCrae's, makes his report. They promise each other to stand fast. Farwell, the dominating engineer in charge of the railway's dam, meets Sheila McCrae and falls in love with her. Because of this he offers her father \$150,000 for his ranch, but the old man will not break with the pool.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT the end of a week Farwell told Keeler that he was going to ride over to Talapus. He added unnecessarily that he wanted to see how his horse was getting on. Whereat his assistant, who had very good ears, grinned internally, though outwardly he kept a decorous face. He did not expect his chief back till late.

But Farwell returned early, and spent a busy half hour in blowing up everybody from Keeler down. On this occasion he had not seen Sheila at all. She and Casey Dunne, so Mrs. McCrae informed him, were at the latter's ranch. Mr. Dunne, it appeared, was buying some house furnishings, and wanted Sheila's advice. Farwell took an abrupt departure, declining a hospitable invitation. He barely looked at the lame horse.

For another week he sulked in a poisonous temper. He was done with Talapus. He thought that McCrae girl had some sense, but if she was going traipsing all over the country with Dunne, why, that let him out. Maybe

she was going to marry Dunne. It looked like it. Anyway, it was none of his business. But the end of it was that he went to Talapus again.

This time he found Sheila alone. The elder McCraes were gone to Coldstream in the buckboard. Young Alec was somewhere on the ditches. Sheila, flanked by clothesbasket and workbasket, sat on the veranda mending his shirts. The occupation was thoroughly unromantic, little calculated to appeal to the imagination. Nevertheless, it appealed to Farwell.

Largely because it is the perverse nature of man to believe that the Fates have set him in the wrong groove, Farwell, like many others whose lives have been spent in exclusively masculine surroundings, believed his tastes to be domestic. Not that he had ever pushed this belief beyond the theoretical stage; nor would he have exchanged places with any of his confrères who had taken wives. But he railed inwardly at the intense masculinity of his life, for the same reason that the sailorman curses the sea and the plainsman the plains. Just as the tragedian is certain in his inmost soul that his proper rôle

is light comedy, while the popular comedian is equally positive that he should be starring in the legitimate; so Farwell, harsh, dominant, impatient, brutal on occasion, a typical lone male of his species, knowing little of and caring less for the softer side of life, cherished a firm belief that his proper place was the exact center of a family circle.

Although he had never seen a home that he cared beans about—including the one of his childhood—the singing of "Home, Sweet Home" invariably left him pensive for half an hour. Theoretically—heretofore always strictly theoretically—he possessed a strong *dulce domum* impulse. And so the spectacle of Sheila mending her brother's shirts was one of which he thoroughly approved. It gave him a feeling of intimacy, as though he had been admitted to the performance of a domestic rite.

Sheila picked up a second shirt, inspected it critically, and frowned. "Now, isn't that a wreck?" she observed. "Sandy's awfully hard on his shirts." She nipped a thread recklessly between her teeth, shot the end deftly through the needle's eye, and sighed. "Oh, well, I suppose I must just do the best I can with the thing."

"Your brother is lucky," said Farwell. "My things get thrown away. No one to look after them when they begin to go."

"That's very wasteful," she reproved him. "Why don't you send them somewhere?"

"Where, for instance?"

"Oh, anywhere. I don't know. There must be women in every town who would like to earn a little money."

"Well, I haven't time to hunt for them. If you know any one around here who would undertake the job, I could give her quite a bit of work. So could the others."

"You don't mean me, do you?" laughed Sheila. "Sandy gives me all I can handle."

"Of course I never thought of such a thing," said Farwell seriously. "Did it sound like that?"

"No, I was joking. I think you take things seriously, Mr. Farwell."

"I suppose so," he admitted. "Yes, I guess I do. I can't help it. I'm no joker; no time for that. Jokers don't get anywhere. Never saw one that did. It's the fellow who keeps thinking about his job and banging away at it who gets there."

"The inference being that I won't get anywhere."

Farwell, puzzled momentarily, endeavored to remember what he had said.

"I guess I made another break. I wasn't thinking of you. Women don't have to get anywhere. Men do—that is, men who count. I've seen a lot of fellows in my own profession—smart, clever chaps—but, instead of buckling down to work, they were eternally running about having a good time. And what did any of them ever amount to? Not that!" He snapped his fingers contemptuously.

"But wasn't that the fault of the men themselves? I mean that, apart from their liking for a good time, perhaps they hadn't the other qualities to make them successful."

"Yes they had," said Farwell positively. "Didn't I say they were clever? It wasn't lack of that—it was their confounded fooling around. Almost every man gets one chance to make good. If he's ready for it when it comes, he's made. If he isn't—well, he isn't. That was the way with these fellows. When they should have been digging into the groundwork of their profession they weren't. And so, when good things were given them, they fell down hard. They lost money for other people, and that doesn't do. Now they're down and out—lucky to get a job with a level and one rodman to boss. There's no sympathy coming to them. It was their own fault."

He spoke positively, with finality, beating the heel of his clenched fist against his knee to emphasize his words. Evidently he spoke out of the faith that was in him. Not a line of his face suggested humor or whimsicality. Not a twinkle of the eye relieved its hardness. He was grave, dour, purposeful, matter-of-fact. He took himself, his life,

and the things of life with exceeding seriousness.

Sheila regarded him thoughtfully. Somehow she was reminded of her father. There was the same gravity, marching hand in hand with tenacity of purpose, fixity of ideas; the same grim scorn of the tonic wine of jest and laughter. But in the elder man these were mellowed and softened. In Farwell, in the strength of his prime, they were in full tide, accentuated.

"Every man should have a good chance, and be ready for it," she replied; "but some men never get it."

"Yes, they do; yes, they do," he answered. "They get it, all right. Only some of them don't know it when it comes; and others are ashamed to own up that they've missed it. We all get it, I tell you, sooner or later."

"It may come too late to some."

"No, no, it comes in time if a man is wide awake. It's about the only square deal creation gives him. And it's about all creation owes him. It's right up to him then. If he's asleep, it's his own fault. I don't say it doesn't happen more than once; but it does happen once."

Plainly he was in deep earnest. He had no tolerance of failure, no excuse for it. According to his theory, every man at some time was master of his fate.

"Have you had your chance?" she asked.

"Not the big chance that I want. I've done some good work here and there. But the big thing is coming to me. I feel it. And I'm in shape to handle it, too. When I do that, I'll quit working for other people. I'll work for myself. Yes, by George! they can come to me."

Sheila laughed at him. His absolute cocksureness was too ridiculous. But in spite of herself she was impressed by the sincerity of his belief in himself. And she realized that opportunity was apt to knock at the door of a man who believed in his own capacity for success and let others know it.

"I probably make you tired," said Farwell. "You asked me, and I told you. I'm not worrying about my fu-

ture. Now, let's talk about yours. You were away when I was here last week."

"Yes, I was over at Chakchak."

"That's Dunne's ranch. Your mother said you were helping him choose some things from a mail-order catalogue."

"Furniture, linen, dishes, and a lot of other things." There was no embarrassment in her tone.

"Oh!" said Farwell; and as he uttered the word it resembled a growl. "Well, when is it to be?"

"When is what to be?"

"Why, the wedding, of course."

"What wedding?" She laid down her work and stared at him. Then she laughed, though the color surged to her cheeks. "Oh, I see. You think I was choosing these things for Mr. Dunne's prospective bride?"

"Of course."

"Not a bit of course—unless Casey has deceived me shamefully. Can't a man furnish his house better without having a wedding in view?"

"He can, but usually he doesn't. That's my experience."

"I wasn't aware that you were married."

"Married?" cried Farwell. "Me? I'm not. I'm glad of it. I have enough to worry me now. I——" He came to an abrupt stop. "Oh, well, laugh away," he added. "I'll tell you what I thought. I thought you were going to marry Dunne."

Sheila's laughter closed suddenly. "You haven't the least right to think that or say it," she said coldly. "It's strange if I can't help a friend choose a few house furnishings without impertinent comment."

"Oh, come!" said Farwell. "I didn't mean to be impertinent, Miss McCrae. I know I'm too outspoken. I'm always putting my foot in it."

"Very well," said Sheila. "I think you said you wanted to speak to me of my future?"

"Yes. I spoke to your father about selling the ranch. He refused point-blank. What can we do about it?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "'We?' If he told you he won't sell, he won't. I didn't know you had spoken to him."

"Couldn't you persuade him?"

"I wouldn't try. I don't want Tala-pus sold. What right have you to hold us up? That's what it amounts to."

"There's a woman for you!" cried Farwell to the world at large. "Hold you up? Great Scott, that's just what I'm not doing! I offered him the value he put on the ranch himself, not a hold-up price. I mean I offered to get it for him. I want you to put it up to him, and get your mother to help you. You ought to have some say in this. He ought to think of you a little."

"It's his ranch," Sheila returned loyally. "He knows what he's doing. When a man has made up his mind, women shouldn't make things harder for him by whining."

"That's right enough, too," said Farwell, whose masculinity was in thorough accord with the last sentiment. "But he is just the same as throwing away a hundred thousand dollars. I don't want to see it. I know what he's up against. I want him to get out while he can break even."

"What about the rest of the ranchers?"

"I don't care a hang for the rest of the ranchers."

"And why do you make a distinction in our favor?"

Farwell was not prepared with an answer, even to himself. Her bluntness was disconcerting. "I don't know," he replied. "It doesn't matter. The main thing is to make your father get out of the way of the tree, for it's going to fall right where he's standing. He can't dodge once it starts. And what hits him hits you."

"Then I won't dodge, either," she declared bravely. "He's right not to sell. I wouldn't if I were in his place."

Farwell slid back in his chair and bit his cigar savagely.

"I never saw such a family!" he exclaimed. "You've got nerve a-plenty, but mighty poor judgment. Get it clear, now, what's going to happen. You'll have enough water for domestic purposes and stock, but none for the ranch. Then it won't be worth a dollar an acre. Same way with the rest. And

now let me tell you another thing: Just as soon as the water is turned off, every rancher will fall all over himself to sell. That's what your father doesn't believe. He'll see when it's too late. It's rank folly."

"It's our own folly, Mr. Farwell!"

"You mean it's none of my business. Well, I make it my business. I butt in on this. I'll put it right up to him. I'll shove the money right under his nose. If he turns it down I'm done. I'll quit. And if you don't do your best to make him take it, you won't be dealing fairly with him, your mother, or yourself."

Sheila stared at him, quite unused to such a tone. He, an utter stranger, was arrogating to himself the position of friend of the family, presuming to criticize her father's wisdom, to tell her what she should do and should not do. But withal she was impressed by his earnestness. His advice, she could not but believe, was entirely disinterested. At the same time, inconsistently, she was angry.

"Well," she said, "I must say you *are* 'butting in.' You—you—oh, you don't lack nerve, Mr. Farwell!"

"Don't worry about my nerve," he retorted grimly. "You'll have other troubles. For Heaven's sake have some sense. Will you do as I tell you, or won't you?" He leaned forward, tapping the arm of her chair with tense fingers.

"No," she answered positively, "I won't."

Young McCrae came around the corner of the house. He was hatless, coatless, muddy from his work in the ditches. A pair of faded blue overalls were belted to his lean middle by a buckskin thong, and his feet were incased in wet moccasins. He came noiselessly but swiftly, not of purpose, but from habit, with a soft, springy step; and he was level with them before they were aware of him. He came to an abrupt halt, his eyes on Farwell, every muscle tensing. For an instant he resembled a young tiger about to spring.

"Oh, Sandy," cried his sister, "what a mess! For goodness sake don't come up here with those muddy moccasins."

"Just as you say," drawled young McCrae. "I thought you might want me. Anything I can do for you, sis? Want anything carried in—or *thrown out*?" He accented the last words.

Farwell, who had read danger signals in men's eyes before, saw the flare of enmity in the young man's, and raised his shoulders in a faint shrug. He smiled to himself in amusement.

"No, there's nothing, thanks," said Sheila, quite unconscious of the hidden meaning of his words. "Better get cleaned up for supper."

McCrae swung on silently, with his rapid, noiseless step. Farwell turned to Sheila.

"Do this for me, Miss McCrae," he pleaded. "Give me a fair chance with your father if you won't help me with him. Don't tell your brother of what I'm trying to do. If you do that, his influence will be the other way."

"If my father has made up his mind, none of us can change it," said Sheila. "But I'll give you a fair field. I won't tell Sandy."

Farwell, in spite of previous virtuous resolutions, remained for supper. The elder McCraes had not returned. The young people had the meal to themselves; and Sheila and Farwell had the conversation to themselves, for Sandy paid strict and confined attention to his food, and did not utter half a dozen words. Immediately afterward he vanished; but, when Farwell went to the stable for his horse, he found the young man saddling a rangy, speedy-looking black.

"Guess I'll ride with you a piece," he announced.

"All right," Farwell replied carelessly. He did not desire company; but if it was forced on him he could not help it.

The light was failing as they rode from the ranch house. The green fields lay somber in the creeping dusk. Night-hawks in search of food darted in erratic flight, uttering their peculiar booming notes. Running water murmured coolly in the ditch that flanked the road. Cattle, full to repletion, stood in contented lethargy by the watering place,

ruminating, switching listlessly at the evening flies which scarcely annoyed them. The vivid opalescent lights of the western sky grew fainter, faded. Simultaneously the zenith shaded from turquoise to sapphire. In the northeast, low over the plains, gleaming silver against the dark velvet background of the heavens, lay the first star.

But Farwell paid no attention to these things. Instead, he was thinking of Sheila McCrae—reconstructing her pose as she bade him good-by, the direct, level gaze of her dark eyes, the contour of her face, the cloudy masses of her brown hair. He was unconsciously engaged in the perilous, artistic work of drawing for his sole and exclusive use a mental "portrait of a lady"; and, after the manner of man attracted by woman, he idealized the picture of his creation. By virtue of this absorbing occupation, he quite forgot the presence of the brother of the woman. But a mile beyond the ranch young McCrae pulled up.

"I turn off here," he said.

"That so? Good night," said Farwell.

"There's something I came to tell you," McCrae pursued. "I'm not making any grand-stand play about it; but you'd better be a lot more careful when you're talking to my sister. Understand?"

"No, I don't," said Farwell. "I never said anything to Miss McCrae that her father and mother mightn't hear."

"Oh, *that*!" said young Sandy, and spat in disgust. "No, I guess you didn't—and you hadn't better. But you told her to do something—fairly ordered her. I heard you, and I heard her tell you she wouldn't. Perhaps you'll tell me what it was?"

"Perhaps I won't."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want to, mostly," said Farwell impatiently. "Also because it's none of your business. Your sister and I understand each other. Our conversation didn't concern you—directly, anyway."

"I'll let it go at that on your say-so," Sandy returned, with surprising calm-

ness. "I'm not crowding trouble with you, but get this clear: You know why you're hanging around the ranch, and I don't. All the same, if you are up to any monkey business, you'll settle it with me."

Farwell's temper, never reliable, rose at once.

"Quite a wild West kid, aren't you?" he observed, with sarcasm. "You make me tired. It's a good thing for you your people are decent." He crowded his horse close to the other. "Now, look here, young fellow, I won't stand for any fool boy's talk. You're old enough to know better. Cut it out with me after this, do you hear?"

"Where are you coming with that cayuse?" demanded young McCrae, and suddenly raked a roweled heel behind the animal's shoulder.

Ensued five strenuous minutes for Farwell, wherein he sought to soothe his mount's wounded feelings. When at last the quadruped condescended to allow his four hoofs to remain on the ground simultaneously for more than a fraction of a second, young McCrae was gone; and Farwell, somewhat shaken, and profane with what breath was left him, had nothing for it but to resume his homeward way.

CHAPTER IX.

The astute Mr. Sleeman's prediction to Farwell—namely, that the attitude of the ranchers would affect land sales—proved correct. Naturally, owing to a perfect advertising machinery, a number of sales were made to people at distant points, who bought for speculation merely. But these, though well enough in their way, were not entirely satisfactory. The company needed actual settlers—men who would go upon the lands and improve them—to furnish object lessons from the ground itself to personally conducted, prospective buyers, who in turn should do the same, and ultimately provide the Prairie Southern branch of Western Airline with a paying traffic in freight and humanity.

But prospective buyers proved an-

noyingly inquisitive. After looking at the company's holdings, they naturally wished to see for themselves what the country was good for; and the obvious way to find out was to visit the established ranches.

Sleeman could not prevent it—nor appear to wish to prevent it. In fact, he had to acquiesce cheerfully and take them himself. That was better than letting them go alone. But the very air seemed to carry rumors. In vain he assured them that there was no fear of trouble, that in any event the company would protect them; in vain he showed them the big canal and beautiful system of ditches, and pointed with much enthusiasm to the armor-belted, double-riveted clause in the sale contracts, guaranteeing to the lucky buyer the delivery of so many miner's inches or cubic feet of water every day in the year.

"It's like this," said one prospective buyer: "They ain't enough water for the whole country, and you're certainly aimin' to cinch some of the men thet's here already so tight they can't breathe. If I buy water they're gettin' now, they're mighty apt to be sore on me. Dunno's I blame them, either. I like to stand well with my neighbors. Your land's all right, but I can't see where we deal."

And the attitude of this individual was fairly representative. Landlookers came, saw; but, instead of remaining to conquer the soil, the majority of them went elsewhere.

This was hard on Sleeman. He was a good salesman, and he had a good proposition; but he was handicapped by conditions not of his creating and beyond his control. And he knew quite well that, while a corporation may not give an employee any credit whatever for satisfactory results, it invariably saddles him with the discredit of unsatisfactory ones.

He foresaw that sooner or later—and very probably sooner—he would be asked to explain why he was not making sales. And he came to the conclusion that, as something was sure to start, he might as well start it himself.

His cogitations crystallized in the form of a letter to his chief, the head of the land department, wherein he told the bald and shining truth without even a mental reservation. And he intimated tactfully that if the department had another man whom they considered better fitted to deal with the unfortunate local conditions, he, Sleeman, would be charmed to assist him, or to go elsewhere in their service, if that seemed best to their aggregate wisdom. He worded this part of his letter very carefully, for he had seen as good men as himself incontinently fired merely because they could not deny themselves the luxury of a petulant phrase.

His letter bore fruit; for Carrol, the mighty head of the land department, came down to see things for himself.

Carrol, however, suffered from a species of myopia not uncommon among gentlemen who have for a long time represented large interests. He had so come to look upon Western Airline as an irresistible force, that the concept of an immovable body was quite beyond him. He had nothing but contempt for any person or set of persons—corporations with equal capital always excepted—rash enough to oppose any of its plans.

"Now, see here," he said at a conference with Sleeman and Farwell. "We can't afford to have our sales blocked this way. Our ditches will carry water now, and the dam itself is nearly completed. Open up the ditches and take all the water you can. Then we'll see whether there is anything in these yarns."

"But if we take water before we need it, we simply stiffen their hand," Sleeman objected. "We give them legitimate grounds to kick."

"They'll kick, anyway," said Carrol. "We need water to grow grass—if anybody should ask you. The sooner we take it the sooner we shall be able to acquire these ranches. Once the men see what they're up against they'll ask us to buy, which we'll do on our own terms. That's the program. What do you think, Farwell?"

"You're the doctor," Farwell replied.

"You don't anticipate any trouble?" "Not a bit," said Farwell contemptuously. "They'll howl, of course. Let 'em. In a month they'll eat out of your hand."

"Quite so," said Carrol; "that's how I look at it."

"There's one man, though," said Farwell, "whom I'd like to see get a fair price. That's McCrae, who owns Talapus Ranch. It's the biggest and best in the country."

"Will he sell now?"

"He might."

"What has he got, and what does he want for it?"

Farwell told him.

"What is it worth, Sleeman?" And at his agent's appraisal, Carrol looked shocked and grieved. "Why, good Lord! Farwell," he said, "he wants almost what his ranch is worth."

"Funny that he should, isn't it?" sneered Farwell, who stood in no awe of Carrol. "Well, and that's what I want him to get."

"Can't do it," said Carrol decisively. "No money in it. Show me how I could make a profit."

"Cut it up into little chunks and sell it to those marks back East," Farwell replied. "I don't have to tell you your business. Make another Sentinel of it if you like."

The reference was to the town site of Sentinel, a half section of prairie which had been bought for three thousand dollars and sold as town lots on paper at a couple of hundred thousand to confiding, distant investors. It was still prairie, and apt to remain so. Carrol had engineered the deal, and he would have blushed if he had not forgotten how. As it was, he smiled sourly.

"I wish I could. Is this McCrae a friend of yours?"

"Put it that way," Farwell replied, frowning at the quizzical expression of Sleeman's eye. "He doesn't want to sell, but I want him to have the chance of refusing real money. He may take it, or he may not. Anyway, I make it as a personal request."

Carrol eyed him for a moment. He knew Farwell's reputation for uncom-

promising hostility to any one who thwarted his plans, accidentally or otherwise. Also Farwell was a good man. He was bound to rise. Some day, he, Carrol, might require his help, and he kept a sharp eye on possibilities of that nature. So he said:

"It isn't business, but to oblige you, Farwell—all right, I'll take the chance that he won't accept. But it's sudden death, mind. No dickering. He accepts, or he doesn't. If not, he'll get just dry-belt prices with the rest when they surrender."

And so a few days afterward Farwell, armed with a check representing one hundred and fifty thousand dollars of lawful money, procured because he considered it likely to have a good moral effect, sought Talapus Ranch and Donald McCrae. And McCrae, as he feared, turned the offer down.

Farwell had calculated on producing the check at the proper psychological moment, in practically stampeding him. The trouble was that the psychological moment failed to arrive. McCrae showed no symptoms of vacillation. The issue was never in doubt.

"I told you before," he said, "I don't want to sell, and I won't sell."

"It's a hundred and fifty thousand cold cash—your own value," urged Farwell. "At six per cent, it's nine thousand a year from now to eternity for you and your wife and children. If you refuse, the best you can hope for is dry-land prices. It's your only salvation, I tell you."

"My word is passed," said McCrae. "Even if it wasn't, I wouldn't be harried off the little bit of earth that's mine. It's good of you to take this trouble—I judge you had trouble—but it's not a bit of use."

"Look here," said Farwell. "Will you talk it over with your family—your wife and daughter particularly? It's due to them."

"I will not," McCrae refused, with patriarchal scorn. "I am the family. I speak for all."

"The old mule!" thought Farwell. Aloud he said: "I want to tell you that in a few days you'll lose half your wa-

ter. The rest will go when the dam is finished. This is final—the last offer, your last chance. I've done every blessed thing I could for you. Right now is when you make or break yourself and your wife and children."

"That's my affair," said McCrae. "I tell you no, and no." He plucked the oblong paper from Farwell's unresisting fingers. "A lot of money, aren't you?" he apostrophized it. "More than I've ever seen before, or will see again, like enough." Suddenly he tore the check in half, and again and again, cast the fragments in the air, and blew through them. "And there goes your check, Mr. Farwell!"

"And there goes your ranch with it," Farwell commented bitterly. "One is worth just about as much as the other now."

"I'm not so sure about that," said McCrae.

"I'm sure enough for both of us," Farwell responded.

With a perfunctory good-by, he swung into the saddle, leaving McCrae, a somber figure, leaning against the slip bars of the corral. He had anticipated this outcome; but, nevertheless, he was disappointed, vaguely apprehensive. In vain he told himself that it was nothing to him. The sense of failure persisted. Once he half turned in his saddle, looking backward, and he caught, or fancied he caught, the flutter of white against the shade of the veranda of the distant ranch house. That must be Sheila McCrae.

For the first time he realized that his concern was for her alone, that he did not care a hoot for the rest of the family. All this bother he had been to, all his efforts with old McCrae, his practical holdup of Carrol, even—he owned it to himself frankly—his failure to push construction work as fast as he might had been for her and because of her. And what was the answer?

"Surely," said Farwell, straightening himself in the saddle, "surely to blazes I'm not getting fond of the girl!"

As became a decent, respectable, contented bachelor, he shied from the idea. It was absolutely ridiculous, unheard-

of. The girl was all right, sensible, good-looking. She suited him as well as any woman he had ever met; but that, after all, was not saying much. He liked her—he made that concession candidly—but as for anything more—nothing to it!

But the idea, once born, refused to be disposed of thus summarily; it persisted. He found himself recalling trivial things, all pertaining to Sheila—tricks of manner, of speech, intonations, movements of the hands, body, and lips—these avalanched themselves upon him, swamping connected, reasonable thought.

"What cursed nonsense!" said Farwell angrily to himself. "I don't care a hang about her, of course. I'm dead sure she doesn't care for me. Anyway, I don't want to get married—yet. I'm not in shape to marry. Why, what the devil would I do with a wife? Where'd I put her?"

A wife! Huh! Instantly he was a prey to misgivings. He recalled shudderingly brother engineers whose wives dragged about with them, living on the edge of construction camps under canvas in summer, in rough-boarded, tarpapered shacks in the winter; or perhaps in half-furnished cottages in some near-by, jerk-water town.

He had pitied the men, fought shy of the women. Most of them had put the best face upon their lives, rejoicing in the occasional streaks of fat, eating the lean uncomplainingly. They led a migratory existence, moved arbitrarily, like pawns, at the will of eminent and elderly gentlemen a thousand or so miles away, whom they did not know and who did not know them. Continually, as their temporary habitations began to take on the semblance of homes, they were transferred, from mountains to plains, from the far North to the tropics. Their few household goods bore the scars of many movings—by rail, by steamer, by freight wagon, and even by pack train.

And there were those whose responsibilities forced them to abandon life at the front. These set up establishments in the new, cheap residential districts of

cities. There the wives kept camp; thither, at long intervals, the husbands took journeys ranging from hundreds of miles to thousands. True, there were those who had attained eminence. These lived properly in well-appointed houses in eligible localities; and their subordinates kept the work in hand during their frequent home-goings. But the ruck—the rank and file—had to take such marital happiness as came their way on the quick-lunch system.

Now, Farwell was a bachelor, rooted and confirmed. He had always shunned married men's quarters. When his day's work was done, he forgathered with other lone males, talking shop half the night in a blue haze of tobacco around a red-hot stove or stretched in comfortable undress in front of a tent.

This was his life as he had lived it for years; as he had hoped to live it until he attained fame and became a consulting engineer, a man who passed on the work of other men.

His theory of his own capacity for domesticity, though sincere, was strictly academic. He had no more idea of putting it into practice than he had of proving in his own person, before his proper time, the doctrine of eternal life.

Now, into the familiar sum of existence, which he knew from divisor to quotient, was suddenly shot a new factor—a woman. He experienced a new sensation, vague, unaccountable, restless, like the first uneasy throbs that precede a toothache. He lit a cigar; but, though he drew in the smoke hungrily, it did not satisfy. He felt a vacancy, a want, a longing.

He became aware of a dust cloud approaching. Ahead of it loped a big, clean-limbed buckskin. In the straight, wiry figure in the saddle he recognized Casey Dunne. Dunne pulled up and nodded.

"Fine day, Mr. Farwell."

"Yes," said Farwell briefly.

"Work coming on all right?"

"Yes."

"That's good," Dunne commented, with every appearance of lively satisfaction. "Been to Talapus? See anything of Miss McCrae there?"

"She's at home, I believe," said Farwell stiffly.

"Thanks. Come around and see me some time. Morning." He lifted the buckskin into a lope again.

Farwell, looking after him, experienced a second new sensation—jealousy.

CHAPTER X.

Casey Dunne, busily engaged in strengthening a working harness with rivets, looked up as a shadow fell across the morning sunlight. The shadow belonged to Tom McHale.

McHale, like Dunne himself, had seen rough times. Older than his employer, he had wandered up and down the West in the good old days of cheap land and no barbed wire, engaged in the congenial, youthful occupation of seeing as much country as he could. In the process, he had turned his hand to almost everything which had fresh air as a collateral, from riding for a cattle outfit to killing meat for railway camps. He and Dunne had come into the Coldstream country at nearly the same time; but Dunne had some money and McHale none at all. Dunne bought land and hired McHale. They worked side by side to make the ranch. McHale bought forty acres from Dunne and worked out the price, bought more, and was still working it out. But apart from financial matters they were fast friends, and either would have trusted the other with anything he possessed.

"Say," said McHale, "there's something wrong. Our ditches ain't runnin' more'n half full."

Casey put down the hammer. "Maybe the ditch is plugged somewhere."

"She may be, but it ain't likely. I've followed her quite a piece. So I come to get me a cayuse to go the rest of the way."

"I'll go with you," said Casey, throwing the harness on a peg.

In five minutes they were loping easily along the ditch, with sharp eyes for possible obstructions. As McHale had said, it was running not half full, and seemed to be falling. The strong, deep,

gurgling note of a full head of water was gone. Instead was a mere babble.

So far as they could see, the flow was unhindered by obstacles; there was no break in the banks. Even around the treacherous sidehill there was no more than the usual seepage. And so at last they rode down to the Coldstream itself, to the intake of the ditch, a rude wing dam of logs, brush, and sand bags, which, nevertheless, had served them excellently heretofore.

"I'm an Injun," McHale ejaculated, "if the whole durn creek ain't lowered!" Because he came from a land of real rivers, he invariably referred to the Coldstream thus slightly.

But unmistakably it had fallen. Half the dam appeared above the surface, slimy, weed-grown, darkly water-soaked. Naturally, with the falling of the water, the ditch had partially failed.

The two men looked at each other. The same thought was present in the mind of each. It was barely possible that a land or rock slide somewhere high upstream had dammed or diverted the current; but it was most improbable. The cause was nearer to seek, the agency extremely human.

McHale bit into fresh consolation and spat in the direction of the inadequate dam.

"I reckon they've started in on us," he observed.

"Looks like it," Casey agreed.

"We need water now the worst way. I was figurin' on shootin' a big head onto the clover, and after that onto the oats. They sure need it. What's runnin' now ain't no use to us. We got to have more."

"No doubt about that, Tom," said Casey. "We'll ride up to their infernal dam and see just what's doing."

"Good enough!" cried McHale, his eyes lighting up. "But say, Casey, them ditch-and-dam boys ain't no meek-and-lowly outfit. Some of 'em is plumb hard-faced. How'd it be if I scattered back to the ranch first. I ain't packed a gun steady since I got to be a hayseed, but——"

"What do you want of a gun? We're

just going to look at things and have a talk with Farwell."

"You never know when you'll need a gun," McHale asserted, as an incontrovertible general proposition.

"You won't need it this time. Come along."

It was almost midday when they came in sight of the construction camp beside the dam. To their surprise, a barbed wire fence had been thrown around it, inclosing an area of some twenty acres. On the trail, a space had been left for a gate, but it had not yet been hung. Beside it stood a post bearing a notice board, and, sitting with his back against the post, a man rested, smoking. As they came up, he rose and sauntered into the trail between the gateposts.

"Hey, you, hold on there!" he said.

Dunne and McHale pulled up.

"Look a-here, friend," said the latter, "do you think you're one of them never-sag gates, or a mountain, or what? You want to see a doctor about them delusions. They'll sure get you into trouble some day."

"That'll be all right about me," the big guardian of the gate returned. "Just read that notice. This is private property."

They read it. It was of the "no-admittance" variety, and forbade entrance to all individuals not in the company's employ.

"We've got business here, and we're going in," said Casey, and began to walk his horse forward.

The man caught the bridle with one hand. The other he thrust into his pocket.

"You get back now," he ordered, "or you'll walk home."

Dunne stopped instantly. His companion's hand made one lightninglike motion, and perforce came up empty.

"And this," said Mr. McHale mournfully—"this was the time I didn't need a gun!"

"Well, you don't need it, do you?" said Casey. "Observe, the gentleman still keeps his sawed-off yeggman's delight in his pocket. Pull it, friend, pull it! Don't scorch the cloth by pressing

the trigger where it is. Steady, Shiner, while the gentleman shoots you!"

The guardian smiled sardonically. "Amuse yourselves, boys, but don't crowd in on me."

"Just as you say," replied Casey. "By the way, you needn't tire your arm holding my horse. He'll stand. Besides, I don't like it."

The man released the bridle and stepped back. "Make this easy for me, boys. I don't want trouble, but I got my instructions."

"Now, you listen here," said McHale. "Lemme tell you something: It's just hell's tender mercy on you I ain't got a gun. If I'd 'a' had it, you'd been beef by the trail right now."

"There's always two chances to be the beef," the other returned, unmoved. "Go fill your hand before you talk to me."

McHale grinned at him. "I like you better than I did, partner. Next time you won't have no kick on what I hold."

"We want to see Farwell," said Casey.

"Why couldn't you say that before?" the guardian returned. "I'll take a chance on you. Go in."

They found Farwell at his quarters before a table covered with prints and tracings.

"What can I do for you?" he asked curtly.

"My ditch has gone half dry," Casey replied. "I observe, too, that the river is lower than usual; which, of course, accounts for the ditch. It occurred to me that perhaps you might account for the river."

"We have begun to take water for our lands," Farwell told him. "Possibly that has something to do with it."

"I shouldn't wonder," Casey agreed dryly. "Why are you taking water now?"

"That," said Farwell deliberately, "is entirely our own affair."

"It affects us. You can't possibly use the water, because your lands are not cultivated."

"The water benefits the land," Farwell rejoined coldly. "It shows in-

tending purchasers that we are actually delivering a sufficient quantity of water. Our use of it is legitimate."

"It's a low-down, *cultus* trick, if you ask me!" McHale interjected forcefully.

"I didn't ask you," snapped Farwell; "but I'll tell you what I'll do. You make another remark like that, and I'll fire you out through that door."

McHale ignored Casey's significant glance.

"That door there?" he asked innocently. "That big, wide door leadin' right outside into all that fresh air? You don't mean that one?"

"That's the one," Farwell returned angrily.

"Well, well, well!" said McHale, in mock wonder. "You don't say? And it looks just like a common, ordinary door, too. Do you reckon you got time right now to show me how it works?"

"Quit it, Tom," said Casey. "Farwell, I want to get right down to case cards. This is a raw deal. I ask you not to take water that you can't use."

"Not to mince matters with you, Dunne," Farwell returned, "I may as well say that we intend to take as much as we like, and when we like. There's plenty of water left in the river. It's merely a question of building your dams to catch it."

"Will you say that there will be plenty when your big dam is finished?"

Farwell lifted his big shoulders in a shrug which coupled utter indifference with an implication that the future was in the hands of Providence.

"Good Lord, Dunne, there's no use talking about that!" said he. "We will take what water we want. You get what is left. Is that plain?"

"Yes," said Casey quietly. "I won't bother you any more."

"But I will," said McHale. "I'll just bother you to make good that bluff of yours about firin' me out of here. Why, you blank-blank, low-flung——"

"Quit it!" Casey interrupted. "Stay where you are, Farwell. I'm not going to have a scrap. Tom, you come with me."

"Oh, well, just as you say, Casey,"

grumbled McHale. "I ain't hostile, special. Only I don't want him to run no blazers on me. He——"

But Casey got him outside and administered a vitriolic lecture that had some effect.

"I'm sorry, Casey," McHale acknowledged contritely. "I s'pose I ought to be known better. But that gent with the gun and Farwell between them got me goin'. Honest, I never hunted trouble in my life. It just naturally tracks up on me when I'm lyin' all quiet in camp. Course, it has to be took care of when it comes."

"There'll be enough to keep you busy," said Casey grimly. And apparently in instant fulfillment of the prophecy came the short, decisive bark of a six-shooter. By the sound, the shot had been fired outside the camp, in the direction of the gate.

"It's that cuss that held us up!" snarled McHale, and swore viciously.

Both men went up into their saddles as if catapulted from the earth. McHale yelled as he hit the leather—a wild, ear-splitting screech, the old trouble cry of his kind in days gone by—and both horses leaped frantically into motion, accomplishing the feat peculiar to cow and polo ponies of attaining their maximum speed in three jumps. They surged around the medley of tents and shacks, and came into the open neck and neck, running like singed cats.

A few hundred yards away, where the new signboard stood beside the trail, a horse struggled to rise, heaved its fore quarters up, and crashed down again, kicking in agony, raising a cloud of dust. Facing it, bending slightly forward, stood a man, holding a gun in his right hand.

Suddenly out of the dust cloud staggered a second, who rushed at the first, head down, extended fingers wildly clutching; and as he came he bellowed hoarsely, the wild-bull cry of the fighting male, crazed with pain or anger. The gun in the hand of the first man flashed up and cut down; and, as it hung for an instant at the level, the report rapped through the still air. But

the other, apparently unhurt, charged into him, and both went down together.

"It's big Oscar!" cried McHale. "That feller downed his horse. Holy catamounts! Look at them mix it! And here's the whole camp a-boilin' after us! Casey, did I hear you say this was the day I didn't need a gun?"

Before they could pull up they almost ran over the fighting men. The two were locked in ferocious grips. The big guardian of the gate was fighting for his life, silently, with clenched teeth, every cord and muscle and vein standing out with the heartbreaking strain.

For the big Swede was the stronger man. Ordinarily mild and sweet-tempered, he was now a wild beast. Foam blew from his mouth and flecked his soft, golden beard, and he rumbled and snarled, beastlike, in his throat. He made no attempt to strike or to avoid the blows which beat against his face; but with one arm around his enemy's neck, the hand gripping the nearer side of the jaw, and the other hand pushing at it, he strove to break his neck. Little by little he twisted it. Gradually the chin pointed to the shoulder, almost past it. It seemed that with the fraction of an inch more the vertebral column must crack like a stick of candy. But the hand on the jaw slipped, and the chin, released, shot back again, to be tucked desperately down against the breastbone.

"Get in here and pull Oscar off!" cried Casey as he leaped from his horse.

"Not in a thousand years," McHale responded. "He can kill him. Let him do it. Serve the cuss right."

"You cursed fool!" snarled Casey. "That gang will be here in half a holy minute. They'll pound Oscar to death if he's fighting then. Here, you crazy Swede, let go! Let go, I say! It's me—Casey Dunne!"

But Oscar was past reason. Once more he had got the palm of his hand beneath that stubborn chin and was lifting it from its shelter. As he put forth his huge strength, he roared out a torrent of Scandinavian oaths, interspersed with the more hardy varieties of Anglo-Saxon epithets.

"Catch hold of him," Casey ordered. "Jam your arm into his windpipe while I break his grip." As he spoke, he kicked the big Swede sharply on the left biceps. For an instant that mighty arm was paralyzed. Casey grasped his wrists and dragged them loose, while McHale, his forearm across the huge, bull-like throat, heaved back.

Oscar came apart from his victim slowly and reluctantly, as a deeply rooted stump yields to the pull of a purchase.

"He kel my Olga! He kel my Olga!" he vociferated. "He shoot her yust like she ban von vulf! By the yumpin' Yudas, you let me go!"

"Keep quiet, keep quiet, I tell you!" cried Casey. "You can get him later. See this bunch coming? They'll kill you with their shovels in half a minute."

The rush of men was almost upon them. They carried the tools which were in their hands the moment the shots were fired—mixing shovels, hoes, axes, pinch bars, and odd bits of wood and iron caught up on the impulse of the instant. Behind, straining every muscle to reach the front, ran Farwell.

Meanwhile Oscar's opponent had risen unsteadily to his feet. His eyes searched the ground, and he made a sudden dive. But McHale was before him.

He swooped on the revolver half buried in the dust, and whirled on the first comers, holding the weapon jammed tightly against his right hip.

"Don't crowd in on us with them shovels and things," he advised grimly. "There's lots of room right where you are."

The rush stopped abruptly. An ugly, short-barreled gun in the hands of a man who bore all the earmarks of a hip shot was not to be treated lightly. There were rough and tough men in the crowd who were quite ready for trouble; but their readiness did not extend to rushing a gunman unless an urgent necessity existed.

Farwell broke through them, breathless from a sprint at top speed. He paid no attention whatever to McHale's weapon.

"What's the matter here?" he demanded. "You, Lewis, speak up!"

"This batty Swede tried to ride over me," Lewis replied. "I give him fair warnin', and then I downed his horse. When he hits the dirt he goes on the prod. These fellers pulled him off of me. That one's got my gun."

"You bet I have!" McHale interjected. "You tried to plug Oscar. I seen you cut down on him at about ten feet—and miss. Looks like you ain't got the nerve to hit anything that's *com-in'* for you. You sorter confines your slaughter to harmless cayuses and such."

"Guess again," said Lewis, unmoved. "I thought I could stand the Swede off, that's why. I shot two foot high on purpose."

"You kel my Olga!" shouted Oscar. "Yust wait, you faller. Ay gat my goose gun, and Ay blow you all to hal! By Yudas, Ay gat skvare kvick!"

"This is crowding things," said Casey. "Mr. Farwell, you really must not plant gunmen by the trails with instructions to shoot our horses."

"Nobody has any such instructions," said Farwell. "This man tried to ride Lewis down, and he protected himself. I'm sorry this occurred, but we are not to blame."

"Without arguing that point," said Casey, "I warn you that we won't stand this sort of thing."

"If you fellows will keep off our lands there will be no trouble," Farwell responded. "We don't want you, and we won't have you. If you come on business, of course that's different. Otherwise keep away. Also we don't want your stock grazing on our property."

"We may as well have an understanding while we're about it," said Casey. "The next man who pulls a gun on me—this Lewis, or anybody else—will have to beat me to the shooting. If you don't want your lands used as part of the range, fence them off. Don't interfere with a single head of my stock, either. And, if I were in your place, I'd offer this man about two hundred dollars for his mare, and throw in an apology."

"But you're not in my place," snapped Farwell. "Nobody is going to pull a gun on you if you behave yourself. If this man puts in a claim for his horse, I'll consider it, but I won't promise anything." He turned to his men. "You get back to work, the lot of you." Without further words, he strode off to the camp.

Lewis stepped up to McHale. "I'll take my gun if you're through with it."

McHale handed him the weapon.

"I don't reckon she's accurate at much over ten yards," he observed. "If I was you, I'd fix myself with a good belt gun. It ain't unlikely I packs one myself after this, and we might meet up."

"Organize yourself the way you want to," said Lewis carelessly, slipping the weapon in his pocket. "And if you're a friend of that big Swede, tell him not to look for me too hard. I don't want to hurt him; but I ain't taking chances on no goose guns." He nodded and marched off after the others.

The three men, left alone, stood in silence for a moment. Then Oscar, with a rumbling curse, began to strip saddle and bridle from his dead pet mare, the tears running down his cheeks.

"And now what?" asked McHale.

"Now," Casey replied, "I guess we've got to make good."

CHAPTER XI.

Some two miles distant from the construction camp at the dam, a little cavalcade moved slowly through the darkness of a moonless, cloudy night. A south-east wind was blowing, but it was a drying wind, with no promise of rain. It had blown for days steadily, until it had sucked every vestige of moisture from the top earth, leaving it merely powdery dust. Because of it, too, no dew had fallen; the nights were as dry as the days.

In the grain fields, the continued blast had stripped the surface soil away from the young plants, wrenching and twisting them, desiccating their roots, which, still too feeble to reach what dampness lay lower down, sucked ineffectually at

the dry breast of the earth. The plants they could not feed took on the pale-green hue of starvation. There, among the young grain, the stronger gusts lifted dust clouds acres in extent. Low down along the surface, the soil sifted and shifted continually, piling in windrows in spots, burying the young plants, leaving others bare. Odd little devils of whirlwinds, marked by columnar pillars of dust, danced deviously across the fields and along the trails. From the standpoint of a disinterested person, the ceaseless wind would have been unpleasant in its monotony; but from the viewpoint of a rancher it was deadly in its persistence.

The moving figures were so strung out that it appeared almost as though they were riding in the same direction fortuitously, without relation to each other. First came two horsemen; then, at an interval of five hundred yards, came a buckboard, with two men and a led horse. In the rear, five hundred yards back, were two more riders.

This order, however, was not the result of accident, but of calculation. The buckboard held Oscar and the elder McCrae. Also it contained a quantity of dynamite. Naturally, it was drawn, not by McCrae's eager road team, but by a pair of less ambition. And the riders, front and rear, were in the nature of pickets; for, though it was unlikely that any one would be met at that time of night, it was just as well to take no chances.

The riders in the lead were Casey Dunne and Tom McHale. Each had a rifle beneath his leg. In addition, McHale wore two old, ivory-handled Colts at his belt, and Dunne's single holster held a long automatic, almost as powerful as a rifle. They rode slowly, seldom faster than a walk, peering ahead watchfully, their ears tuned to catch the slightest suspicious sound.

"This here is like old times," said McHale. "Durn me if I hadn't about forgotten the feel of a gun under my leg. I wish we could have our photos took now. We sure look plenty war-like."

"I don't want any photo," said Casey.

"If I can get home without meeting any one, it will suit me down to the ground. I wish we hadn't brought those guns. It's safer every way."

"It's safer for some people," McHale commented. "S'pose we struck hard luck to-night and got backed into a corner or followed up too close—how'd we look without guns? Course, I'd take awful long chances before I shot at anybody; but all the same a Winchester helps out a retirin' disposition a whole lot."

"No doubt about that. But the devil of packing a gun is the temptation to use it before you really have to. That accounts for a lot of trouble. Why, even in the old days, a man who didn't pack a gun was safe, unless he tracked up with some mighty mean specimen of a killer. And those dirty killers usually didn't last long."

"That's so in one way," McHale admitted, "but I look at it different. If nobody but the killers had packed guns they'd have run the whole show. Some of them gents killed for the fun of it, like a mink in a chicken coop. The mean sort'd pick out some harmless, helpless party, and stomp up and down, r'arin' and cussin' till they got up a big mad. Then chances was about even they'd shoot. Usual they didn't try them plays on men that wore their artillery in plain sight."

"Well, we haven't any killers now, anyway," said Dunne as he pulled up. "This is about as far as it's safe to go with the horses. We'll wait till the others come up."

In a few minutes, the faint straining of leather, creak of springs, and subdued clank of axles came to them. The buckboard loomed out of the darkness, and halted suddenly.

"That you, boys?" McCrae's voice asked.

"Yes. We won't take the horses any farther. If that watchman is on the dam to-night he might hear something. We can pack the powder the rest of the way ourselves."

The rear riders, young Sandy McCrae and Wyndham, arrived. Then a dispute arose. No one wished to remain

with the horses. Casey Dunne settled it.

"There's only one man going to plant powder and cut fuses, and that's Oscar," said he. "If we all go messing around with it in the dark, half the shots won't fire, and we may have an accident. Outside of that there's nothing to do except take care of the watchman if he's there; and he's sure to be. Wyndham, you're not cut out for that sort of work. You'll stay with the ponies. Now, McCrae, you'd better turn around and drive home."

McCrae pulled the team around. "Good luck, boys," said he quietly, and was gone. The spare horse which had been tied to the buckboard remained for Oscar.

The Swede proceeded to load himself with dynamite, placing it around his legs in the high socks he wore, in the breast of his shirt, and in his pockets. This was the overflow from a gunny sack in which he carried the rest. He resembled a perambulating mine.

"Ay ban ready now," he announced.

"I say, Oscar, don't trip," said Wyndham facetiously.

"Nor interfere," McHale added. "Plant them number twelves of yours plumb wide apart, Oscar, and don't try to scratch your ankle with your boot."

Oscar grinned at them, his big, white teeth shining in the darkness. He attempted the repartee of his adopted country.

"You faller think you mek big yoke—vat!" said he. "You go to hal, please."

"Sure—if you bump anything hard," McHale retorted.

"Come on, come on!" said Casey impatiently.

Wyndham remained with the horses. He was to allow the others half an hour, and then bring the animals down nearer the dam, so that no time should be lost in getting away. His companions vanished in the darkness.

Young McCrae took the lead. In the moccasins he affected he trod noiselessly, making no more sound than a prowling, nocturnal animal. Casey Dunne followed, almost as light-footed. Behind him Oscar clumped along, planting

his heavy boots solidly at every step. McHale brought up the rear. Soon they struck an old cattle trail which wound down a short coulee and brought them to the bank of the river immediately below the dam. McCrae halted.

"There she is," he announced.

Across the river lay the huddled, black shapes of the camp buildings, with here and there a pallid spot which marked a tent. Not a light was visible there. Evidently the camp slept, and that was as it should be. But nearer at hand, beside the bank of the river where the bulk of the dam reared itself, a solitary light gleamed.

"That's the watchman," McCrae whispered. "We're in luck, boys. He's on this side."

"Say, Ay sneak up on dat faller," Oscar proposed. "Ay mek von yump—so!—and Ay gat him in de neck." He uttered a horrible sound, suggestive of death by strangulation.

"Shut up!" hissed young McCrae fiercely. "*Keep* him quiet, Tom!"

"Shut up, Oscar!" growled McHale. "Don't you savvy nothing? You and me ain't in on this. Stand right still now, and don't breathe no harder than you have to. Go to it, boys!"

If young McCrae had been a prowling animal before, he was now the ghost of one. Casey Dunne, behind him, endeavored to copy his noiseless method of progress. Gradually they drew near the light.

They could discern the figure of the watchman beside it. He was sitting on a stick of timber, smoking. McCrae drew from his pocket a long canvas bag, of about the dimensions of a small bologna sausage, and weighed it in his hand. They crept nearer and nearer. They were not more than ten feet away. The guardian of the dam laid his pipe on the timber, rose to his feet, and stretched his arms high above his head in a huge, satisfying yawn.

At that instant McCrae sprang like a lynx on a fawn. The sandbag whistled as it cut down between the upstretched arms, and the watchman dropped as if hit by lightning.

"That was an awful crack, Sandy,"

said Casey reprovingly. He flashed the lantern at the face, and slipped his fingers to the wrist. To his relief, the pulse was strong.

"I had to get through his hat, hadn't I?" said McCrae. "I wasn't taking any chances. He's got a head like a bull. Come on, let's fix him up."

The watchman came out of their hands trussed up like a fowl for roasting, securely gagged, with a gunny sack drawn over his head and tied at the waist. They lifted him between them and bore him away from the dam to what they considered a safe distance.

"Watchman, tell us of the night," chuckled Casey. "He's all right, by the way he kicks, and nothing can hit him away out there. They'll see him first thing in the morning. Hustle up Oscar, now. This is where he gets action."

Oscar, when he came up, got to work at once. Because the planting of shots by different men would have been both unsatisfactory and dangerous, he worked alone. The others lay flat in the gloom, watching the lantern which he had appropriated flitting here and there along the structure.

"Oscar's some powder man, you bet," McHale observed. "He don't look like he had the savvy, but he'll cut them fuses so's the shots'll come mighty near together. Blamed if I know why a Swede takes to powder. Seems to come natural to 'em, like pawin' snow to a cayuse."

The light blinked and disappeared as Oscar descended. Across in the camp a dog began to bark, at first uncertainly, with what was almost a note of interrogation, and then, as the wind brought confirmation of suspicion to his nostrils, with savage vigor. By the sound, he was apparently approaching the dam.

Some sleeper, awakened by the noise, yelled a profane command to the animal, which had no effect. It merely awakened another, who cursed the first sleepily.

"Hey, Kelly," he called, "hit that dog with a rock!" A pause. "Hey, Kelly, wake up, there!"

"I guess we've got Kelly," Casey whispered to Sandy. He called out

hoarsely: "He'll quit in a minute! G'wan to sleep. You don't know your own luck."

But the dog continued to bark, jumping up and down frantically. A light appeared in a window of one of the shacks.

"Blazes!" muttered McHale, "somebody's getting up."

A low whistle came from behind them. It was significant of the tension of the moment that both McHale and McCrae jumped. But Dunne was cooler.

"That's only Wyndham with the horses," he said.

Suddenly a long aperture of light appeared in the dark wall of the shack. For a moment it was partially obscured by a figure, and then it vanished utterly. The door had closed. The light from the window remained.

"Somebody's come out," said McHale. "That's about where Farwell's shack is. What's keepin' Oscar? He's had time enough. Maybe I'd better go across and hold up this feller? We don't want——"

The lantern bobbed into view once more. Oscar was coming at last, but he was taking his time about it. Had he placed the powder? Had he fired the fuses? Or had something gone wrong at the last moment? They asked themselves these questions impatiently. It would be just like him to have forgotten his matches. It might not occur to him to use the lantern flame. In that case there——

"Come on, hurry up there!" McCrae called softly.

Oscar clambered up beside them. "Ay tal you somet'ing——" he began. But the dog yelped suddenly. A sharp voice cut across to them:

"Kelly! What the devil's going on here? What are you about? Who's that with you?"

"Farwell!" Dunne whispered. "Did you light the fuses, Oscar?"

"Sure t'ing," Oscar replied. Proud of the phrase, he repeated it. "She ban light, all right."

"When'll she fire? Quick, now?"

"Mebbe fema minute. We ban haf

lots of time to gat out of har. Say, Kessy, what faller——"

An oath cracked in the darkness like a rifle shot.

"You, Kelly, answer me! Come across here at once!" He paused for a moment. "By thunder! Kelly, I'll come over there and——"

Casey Dunne did not hear the conclusion of the sentence. His mind was working swiftly. For, if Farwell tried to come across, he would probably be killed by the coming explosions; and that must be prevented at any cost. The destruction of the dam was justifiable, even necessary. But homicide with it would never do. To shoot in self-defense or to protect his rights was one thing; to allow a man to be killed by a blast was quite another. But just how to prevent it was the question.

"Come along, Casey," McHale urged. "We ain't got too much time."

"Time or not, we can't have Farwell hurt. You go. I'll be after you in a minute."

"If you stay we all stay," said McHale. "Let him take his chance. Come on!"

"Git, I tell you," Casey insisted. "I've got to keep him where he is till the first shot goes. He called out: 'All right, Mr. Farwell. You don't need to come. I'll be there.'"

"That's not Kelly's voice," snapped Farwell. "What deviltry's going on here?"

By his voice, Casey guessed that he was advancing. He dropped the pretense as useless. "Get back, there!" he ordered sharply, but endeavoring to disguise his natural voice. "Get back to your shack, you, or I'll drill you!"

Farwell's response came with surprising promptness in the form of a revolver bullet that sang just above Casey's head. By the momentary flash of the weapon his big figure was just discernible standing bent forward, legs wide apart, tense and watchful.

As Casey's hand dropped to his automatic, McHale clutched his wrist. "Don't shoot!" he whispered.

"I'm not going to hit him," Casey roB

replied. "I'm just going to make him stay where he is."

"Let me," said McHale, and fired as he spoke. Farwell's revolver answered. They emptied the guns in the darkness; but as one shot high by accident and the other low by design, no damage ensued.

The camp, aroused by the shooting, buzzed like a hornet's nest. Lights appeared everywhere. Dark figures streamed out of doorways and thrown tent flaps; and, once outside, stood in helpless uncertainty.

"Coom, coom!" cried Oscar. "Ve gat out of har!" They rose and ran in the dark.

A mighty roar drowned the echoes of the pistol shots, as the bass bellow of his sire might dominate the feeble bleatings of a new-born calf. A vivid flash split the night. In the momentary illumination details were limned sharply—the buildings, the groups of men on one side, the running figures on the other. And poised, stationary, as it seemed, in mid-air, above the instant eruption, hung a mushroom cloud of smoke and dust, specked with fragments of riven wood and shattered concrete. Through the succeeding contrasted blackness the debris thudded upon the earth. With scarcely an interval followed a second shot, a third, a fourth. The air became alive with hurtling masses raining from the heavens.

The four dynamiters reached Wyndham, who, cursing in his excitement, was straining every muscle and a comprehensive vocabulary in an effort to hold the frightened horses.

Casey, McHale, and Sandy seized their nigh stirrups, shot them at their left toes, gripped saddle horns, and went up in an instant. Oscar, less expert, fumbled for a hold with his toe, hopping on his right leg as his horse sidled and backed.

"Stand still, Ay tal you!" he gritted. "By Yudas, Ay club hal from you purty quick!"

Young McCrae wheeled his horse on the off side and gripped the headstall by the bit. "Up you go, now!" he cried, and Oscar fell into the saddle, the horn

striking him amidships and momentarily checking a torrent of oaths. "Hang on, now!" McCrae ordered and let go.

They shot away with a wild plunge and a scurry of panicky hoofs. The going was rough, but luck was with them. They surged up the coulee, emerging on the higher bench land by the trail.

"Look here, Tom," said Dunne, "what did you want to do the shooting for back there? Afraid I'd get rattled and hit somebody?"

McHale grinned in the darkness. "Not hardly. Mostly, Casey, you *ma-mook tumtum* a heap—you look ahead and savvy plenty. You're foolish—the way an old dog fox is. But onct in a while you overlook a bet. You're too plumb modern and up to date."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"A lot. I don't know no other man hereabouts that packs a forty-four automatic. See, now?"

"No."

"Why, Casey," said McHale, "I'm surprised at you! It's clear as gin. Them guns spits out the empty shells right where you stand. Farwell finds 'em, and he goes lookin' for a gun to fit 'em. You've got it. There ain't no other gun hereabouts that takes forty-four automatic ammunition. Now, my old gun don't leave no trail of ca'rtridges to follow unless I breaks her open. So I just naturally horned in and played the hand myself."

CHAPTER XII.

When daylight fully disclosed the wreck, and also his night watchman lying helpless out of harm's way, Farwell was in a savage temper. Never before, in all his career, had anything like that been put over on him. And the knowledge that he had been sent there for the express purpose of preventing anything of the kind did not improve matters. He hated to put the news on the wire—to admit to headquarters that the ranchers apparently had caught him napping. But, having dispatched his telegram, he set his energies to finding some clew to the perpetrators of the outrage.

He drew a large and hopeless blank in Kelly, the watchman. Mr. Kelly's films ran smoothly up to a certain point, after which they were not even a blur. The Stygian darkness of his hiatus refused to lift by questioning. He had neither seen nor heard anything suspicious or out of the ordinary. About one o'clock in the morning he had laid down his pipe to rest his long-suffering tongue. Immediately afterward, so far as his recollection went, he found himself tied up, half smothered, with aching jaws and a dull pain in his head.

Farwell metaphorically bade this unsatisfactory witness stand aside, and proceeded to investigate the gunny sack, the rope that had tied him, and the rag and stick that had gagged him. Whatever information these might have given to M. Lecoq, S. Holmes, or W. Burns, they yielded none to Farwell, who next inspected the ground. Here, also, he found nothing. There were footmarks in plenty, but he could not read them. Though in the first flare of the explosion he had glimpsed three or four running figures, his eyes had been too dazzled to receive an accurate impression.

"Maybe an Australian nigger or a Mohave trailer could work this out," he said in disgust to his assistant, Keeler. "I can't."

"Well, say," said young Keeler, "talking about Indians—how about old Simon over there? Might try him."

He pointed. Just above the dam an Indian sat on a pinto pony, gazing stolidly at the wreck. His hair, streaked with gray, was braided, and fell below his shoulders on either side. His costume was that of ordinary civilization, save for a pair of new, tight moccasins. Having apparently all the time there was, he had been a frequent spectator of operations, squatting by the hour watching the work. Occasionally his interest had been rewarded by a meal or a plug of tobacco. These things he had accepted without comment and without thanks. His taciturnity and gravity seemed primeval.

"Huh! That old beat!" said Farwell contemptuously. "Every Indian can't trail. However, *we* can't, that's sure.

Maybe he can make a bluff at it. Go and get him."

Keeler brought up old Simon, and Farwell endeavored to explain what was wanted in language which he considered suited to the comprehension of a representative of the original North American race. He had a smattering of Chinook,* and for the rest he depended on gestures and a loud voice, having the idea that every man can understand English if it be spoken loudly enough.

"Simon," said he, "last night bad man come and *mamook* raise heap hell. Him blow up dam. You savvy 'dam,' hey?"

"Ah-ha!" Simon grunted proudly. "Me *kumtuks*. Me *kumtuks* hell. Me *kumtuks* dam. Dam good, dam bad; godam——"

"No, no!" rasped Farwell. "*Halo* cuss word—no bad word—no. D-a-m, 'dam.' Oh, Lord, the alphabet's wasted on him, of course. What's Siwash for dam, Keeler?"

"Search me," said Keeler; "but 'pence' is Chinook for fence, and 'chuck' means water. Try him with that." And Farwell tried again.

"Now, see, Simon! Last night *hiyu*—in *chuck pence*. Set um off. *Mamook*

cultus man come. Bring dynamite—*hiyu skookum powder*. Put um in dam *poo!*—all same shoot. Bang! Whoosh! Up she go!" He waved his hand at the wreck. "You *kumtuks* that?"

Simon nodded, understanding.

"*Mamook* bang," said he; "*mamook* bust!"

"Right," Farwell agreed. "*Cultus* man come at night. Dark. Black. No see um." He made a footprint in the earth, pointed at it, and then to Simon, and waved a hand at the horizon generally. "You find trail, follow, catch um. Hey, can you do that, Simon? And I'll bet," he added to Keeler, "the infernal old blockhead doesn't understand a word I've said."

But Simon's reply indicated not only comprehension, but a tolerable acquaintance with modern business methods. Said he:

"How moch you give?"

Keeler grinned. "I think he gets you," he commented.

"I guess he does," Farwell admitted.

"How much you want?"

"Hundred dolla!" Simon answered promptly.

"Like blazes!" snapped Farwell. "You blasted, copper-hided old Shylock, I'll give you five!"

Simon held out his hand. The gesture was unmistakable.

"And they say an Indian doesn't know enough to vote!" said Farwell. He laid a five-dollar bill in the smoky palm. "Now get busy and earn it."

Simon inspected the ground carefully. Finally he took a course straight away from the dam.

"That's about where those fellows ran," said Farwell. "Maybe the old scoundrel can trail, after all."

Simon came to a halt at a spot cut up by hoofs. He bent down, examining the tracks carefully. Farwell, doing likewise, caught sight of a single moccasin track plainly outlined. It lay, long and straight-footed, deep in the soft soil; and where the big toe had pressed there was the mark of a sewn-in patch.

"Here, look here!" he cried. "One of 'em was wearing moccasins, and patched moccasins at that."

*AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Chinook, the trade jargon of the Pacific coast, is similar in origin to the pidgin English of China. It is composite, its root words being taken from various tribal vocabularies and from the French and English languages. The spelling conforms to the pronunciation; and the latter in most cases is merely the Indian rendering of French and English word sounds. It is, in fact, an Indian Volapuk, used extensively by the tribes of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska. The number of words is comparatively small, probably not exceeding nine hundred. Therefore each has various meanings, rendered by shades of pronunciation or by combination with other words. Thus the word "*mamook*," signifying to do, to make, to perform, or anything denoting action, begins some two hundred phrases, for each of which there is one equivalent English word. Its nearest parallel is the French verb "*faire*," and its use is much the same. It is impossible in this space to attempt a vocabulary. "*Halo*" is the general negative. Throughout I have endeavored to supply the meaning by the context.

"Sure enough," said Keeler.

"Here, Simon, look at this," said the engineer. "You see um? One *cultus* man wear moccasin. Was he white man or Indian?"

Simon surveyed the track gravely, knelt, and examined it minutely. "Mebbyso Injun," he said.

"Mebbyso white man," Farwell objected. "What makes you think it's an Indian?"

"Oleman moccasin, him," Simon replied oracularly. "White man throw him away; Injun keep him, mend him—*mamook tipshin klaska*."

"Something in that, too," Farwell agreed. "It's a straight foot—no swing-in to the toe. Still, I don't know. I've seen white men like that. I wonder——" He broke off abruptly, shaking his head.

Simon gave a correct imitation of mounting a horse. "Him *klatawa*," he announced. "Him Injun."

"Got on his horse and pulled out, hey?" said Farwell. "Yes, of course, that's what he did. That's why the track is pressed in so deep. That's all right. Simon, how many men stop last night?"

"Four, five cayuse stop," Simon answered. "Mebbyso four, five man stop."

"Well, four or five cayuses must have left a trail of some kind. You find it. Follow—catchum. Find where they live—their *illahee*, where they hang out. You get that?"

Simon nodded and went to his horse. Farwell frowned at the lone moccasin track, and, lifting his eyes, beheld Simon in the act of mounting. Contrary to the custom of white men, the old Indian did so from the off side. Farwell swore suddenly.

"What?" Keeler asked.

"Hey, Simon!" said Farwell. "This man with oleman moccasin—him make track getting on cayuse? Him stand so to get on cayuse. You sure of that?"

Simon nodded. "Ah-ha!" he agreed.

"Then he's a white man," Farwell exclaimed. "This is the track of a right foot, made while he was standing reach-

ing for the stirrup with the left. An Indian always gets on his horse from the wrong side, and puts his right foot in the stirrup first."

"So he does," said Keeler.

"So this fellow is a white man," Farwell concluded triumphantly. "We want a white man with a patched moccasin. You *kumtuks*, Simon? Injun mount so. White man so—left foot up, right foot down. White man's moccasin, Simon."

"Huh!" Simon grunted gravely. "Mebbyso white man; mebbysio *sitkum Siwash*."

"Half-breed—nothing!" Farwell declared. "Straight white, I tell you. Now get ahead on the trail."

But whatever Simon's skill as a trailer, it availed little. In half a mile the hoofprints merged with many others in a beaten track, and so were lost. Simon halted.

"*Halo mamook!*" said he, signifying that he had done his possible. The fact was so self-evident that Farwell could not gainsay it.

"That's an easy five for you," he grumbled. "We might as well get back, Keeler. I never took any stock in that old buck, anyway. He's a gold brick, like all the rest of them."

But Simon, when they had gone, kept along the beaten track. And shortly he came to where McCrae had turned the buckboard around. Simon, after examining the tracks, took pains to efface them entirely; after which he ambled on, his usually 'grave countenance illumined by a grin.

Following the road, peering narrowly at either side, he finally came in sight of Talapus Ranch. Halting, he surveyed the fields.

The ditches of Talapus were once more running rap-full; and Donald McCrae, his son, and half a dozen men were busy with shovels and hoes turning the water down among the young grain in marks already prepared which followed the natural slope of the land; taking care that the little rivulets should be of sufficient strength to run the length of the field, but not so strong as to wash out the soil; adjusting the flow

to a nicety with miniature dams of sods and stones.

Old Simon rode slowly along the ditch until he came to where Sandy McCrae was working.

"Hello, Simon!" said the latter carelessly. "How you makin' it this mornin'? You keepin' *skookum*?"

"Ah-ha!" Simon responded gutturally. "*Skookum*, you?"

"You bet," Sandy replied. "*Hiyu skookum* me." He leaned on his shovel for a moment, stretching his young, sinewy body, grinning at the Indian. The latter dismounted, and, stooping down, touched the young man's worn foot-gear.

"*Mamook huyhuy moccasin*," said he.

"Swap moccasins?" Sandy repeated. "What for? Yours are new. *Chee moccasin*, you; *oleman moccasin*, me. What are you getting at? That's fool talk."

But Simon insisted. "*Mamook huyhuy*," said he. "*Halo mitlite oleman moccasin*."

"Why shouldn't I wear my old moccasins?" asked Sandy.

Simon lifted McCrae's right foot and placed his finger on a patch beneath the ball of the great toe. His features expanded in a knowing grin. Sandy McCrae's face suddenly became grave and his mouth grim. His voice, when he spoke, was hard and metallic.

"Quit this sign business and spit it out of you," he ordered. "*Mamook kumtuks*! Tell me what you mean!"

Simon condescended to a measure of English which he knew well enough, but which he usually disdained on general principles. He pointed back whence he had come.

"*Tenas sun* (early morning) me stop along camp. Boss *tyee man* goodandam mad. Him say *cultus man mamook* raise *hiyu* hell. Catch *hiyu skookum* powder—bang! Whoosh! Upshego!" He mimicked Farwell's words and gestures to a nicety. "Him say, s'pose me catch *cultus man* me catch '*kwinnum dolla*.'" He exhibited the five-dollar bill, grinning once more. "Good! Me *nanitch* 'round me find trail. Boss *tyee*

man see track of *oleman moccasin*." He pointed to Sandy's right foot.

Young McCrae, his face black as the heart of a storm cloud, said nothing; but his eyes glinted dangerously. The Indian continued:

"Me *klatawa kimta* on trail. *Tyee man* him come, too. Bimeby come to *hiyu* trail, all same road. Me lose trail. Me tell *tyee man* '*halo mamook*.'" He grinned broadly. "Him *klatawa* back *yaka illahee*. Me come along alone. See where *chik-chik* wagon turn around. All right. Me come tell you *mamook huyhuy moccasin*."

It was very plain to Sandy now. The old Indian had recognized the track of his moccasin at the dam; had followed the trail to the traveled road where he had deliberately quit; and had come on to warn him to get rid of the incriminating moccasins which were even then on his feet. The suggestion of exchange was merely polite diplomacy.

"Simon," he said slowly, "blamed if you ain't a white Injun!"

Simon acknowledged the compliment characteristically. He produced a pipe and examined the empty bowl with interest.

"*Halo smokin', me!*" he observed gravely.

Sandy nodded and handed him a large plug. The Indian filled his pipe and put the tobacco in his pocket.

"You my *tillikum*," he announced. "When you *tenas* boy I like you, you like me. Good. *Konaway McCrae* (every McCrae) my *tillikum*." He made a large gesture of generous inclusion, paused for an instant, and shot a keen glance at his friend. "*Cas-ee Dunne* my *tillikum*, too."

"Sure," said Sandy gravely. "We're all friends of yours, Simon."

Simon nodded and considered.

"All rancher my *tillikum*," he continued, after an interval. "Ah-ha! Good! S'pose some time me *mamook* sick, me feel all same *oleman*—no more grub stop, no more smokin' stop—mebbyso all rancher *potlatch* grub, *potlatch* smokin', send doctin', send med'cin'? You *kumtuks*?"

He formulated this general scheme of

pension and old-age insurance gravely. With five dollars in hand and a future provided for by grateful ranchers, he would be able to worship the *Saghalie Tyee* at the mission with a good heart.

"You don't want much," Sandy commented. "I guess we'd chip in, though, if you got up against the iron any time. Sure. S'pose you *mamook* sick, all rancher *mamook* help, give you *muckamuck* and smokin', stake you to doctor and dope; s'pose you go *mimoluse*, bury you in style."

Simon nodded, well pleased. A fine funeral thrown in for good measure suited his ideas perfectly. It was no more than his due for this evidence of friendship. So much for the future. Now for the present. He surveyed the five-dollar bill and chuckled.

"*Tyee man hyas damfool!*" said he. He cast a shrewd eye at the sun, which stood near the meridian. "*Sitkum sun!*" he announced.

"Noon—and that means you're hungry," said Sandy. "I never saw you when you weren't. Go on up to the house, and say I sent you. *Muckamuck mika sick yakwahtin*. Eat till your belly goes back on you, if you want to."

Simon grinned again; but he pointed to Sandy's feet.

"You *mamook huyhuy* moccasin dam quick!" he warned once more.

CHAPTER XIII.

Casey Dunne crossed from the Coldstream Supply Company's store—which was also the post office—to Bob Shiller's hotel. His pockets bulged with mail, for it was his first visit to town since the destruction of the dam a week before, and there was an accumulation of letters, newspapers, and periodicals. Ever since then he had been irrigating, throwing upon his thirsty fields every drop of water he could get.

As he came upon the veranda, he saw Shiller in conversation with a stranger.

"Oh, Casey," said Shiller, "I want you to shake hands with Mr. Glass. Mr. Glass—Mr. Dunne. Mr. Glass," the genial Bob went on, "has some notion of locating here if he can get a

place to suit him. He likes the land, and he likes the climate; but the recent—the events—er—the way things shape at present has a *leetle* undecided him. Anything Mr. Dunne tells you, Mr. Glass, will be straight. He has land to burn, and one of our best ranches. Yes. I'll just leave you to talk it over together." And so saying, he executed a masterly retreat.

Glass was a mild, colorless, middle-aged man, attired in worn hand-me-down garments. His blue eyes, clear and direct enough, seemed to hold a little of the pathetic apprehension and appeal of a lost puppy. He hesitated when he spoke, repeatedly qualifying his statements. His was the awkwardness of the man who, having spent his life in familiar surroundings, in some small community, suddenly finds himself in new places among strangers. And, lacking adaptability, is constrained and ill at ease.

"You see, Mr. Dunne, it's this way with me," he began. And, appearing to remember something suddenly, he asked: "Hadn't we better have a drink?"

"Not unless you need it in your business," said Casey. "Sit down and smoke a cigar with me and tell me your trouble."

"Well, I'd just as soon," said Glass, plainly relieved. "I don't drink much myself. My wife don't like it. It's a bad example for the children. But I thought that out here, maybe from what I'd heard——"

"Current Western fiction!" Casey laughed. "No, we don't drink every time we shake hands. Couldn't stand it. Well, what can I do for you?"

And thereupon Mr. Glass unbosomed himself ramblingly, with much detail, which included a sketch of his life and family history. Casey saw that Shiller had unloaded a bore on him.

Glass, it appeared, hailed from Maine, from the vicinity of one of the "obscoths" or "coggins." He had followed various callings—carpenter, market gardener, and grocer—with indifferent success; but he had succeeded in accumulating a few thousand dollars. His eldest girl

was not well. Consumption ran in her mother's family. The doctor had ordered a dryer climate, a higher altitude. For some years Glass had been thinking of migrating westward; but he had stuck in the narrow groove, lacking the initiative to pull up stakes and see for himself the land in which others had prospered. This sickness had decided him—and here he was.

He liked the climate, which he was sure would be just the thing for his daughter; and he liked the land. But here was the point—and it was the point which was worrying Sleeman gray-headed. There was trouble between the ranchers and the land company. Not that it was for him to say who was right or wrong. But there *was* trouble. Now, he was a man of small means, and he was forced to put all his eggs in one basket. Which was to say, that if he bought land, and subsequently was unable to get water for it, he would be ruined. Also he had heard that the ranchers were unfriendly to those who bought land from the company.

"And I'm a man that has kept out of trouble all my life, Mr. Dunne," he concluded plaintively. "I'm on good terms with everybody at home, and I wouldn't want, right at the start-off, as you might say, to have anybody think I was trying to take water away from him. And yet I like the country. I thought maybe you could advise me what to do. It seems like a lot of gall asking you, too; you having land for sale and me thinking of buying the company's. But, then, I saw their advertising. It was only right I should go to them, wasn't it?"

"Of course," said Casey. "I haven't any land for sale now. I'm holding what I have. But as to advising you, it's a difficult thing. Here's the situation: The amount of the total water supply is limited. The railway claims the right to take it all, if it likes. We claim enough to irrigate our properties. Right there we lock horns. There is a lawsuit just starting; but the Lord only knows which way it will be settled, or when. And now you know as much about it as I do."

"It don't look good," said Glass,

shaking his head. "No, sir, it don't look good to me. And here's another thing. They tell me that there was trouble out here a ways the other night. I mean with the company's dam. Of course, I don't know anything about it myself; it's just what I've heard. I hope you don't mind me speakin' of it."

"Not in the least. Well, what about it, Mr. Glass?"

"It was a turrible risky thing to do—to blow up a dam," said Glass. "It'd be against the law, wouldn't it? Of course, I don't say it was. It might not be. I don't claim to know, and likely whoever done it had reasons. All the same, I wouldn't choose to be mixed up in doin's like that."

"Good thing to keep out of," Casey agreed.

"I wouldn't want anything of mine to be blown up."

"But who would blow up anything of yours?"

"I don't say anybody'd do it, of course," Glass protested hastily. "Only, you see, men that'd blow up a dam are—I mean, if I bought land off of the company and started in to use water and farm, they might blame me. I wouldn't want to get my neighbors down on me, Mr. Dunne."

"Does that mean you think that some of your prospective neighbors blew up the dam?"

"No, no," Glass disclaimed, in a flurry. "I don't know who did it, of course. I'm not saying anybody did. Only somebody must of. That's just common sense. You'll admit that yourself."

"Why, yes, that's a pretty safe conclusion," Casey agreed. "I don't think you need worry about that, though. The only point is whether the company will be able to keep an agreement to supply you with water. I can't tell you whether they will or not. If you buy you take a chance. If you bought from me, you'd take almost the same chance."

"I don't know what to do," said Glass, picking nervously at his white-metal watch chain. "It's hard to tell—there's so many things to be considered. I can't afford to lose money. This irri-

gation's new to me. I never saw it working. Would you mind if I came out to your farm and sort of looked around? I could learn a lot that way. Maybe if you had time, you could explain what I didn't understand? But, then, I wouldn't want to trouble you."

But Casey Dunne was already tired of Glass, of his timidity, his indecision, his self-effacement, his continual air of apology for existence.

"Come any time," he said. "Glad to see you. Sorry I can't do any more for you; but you'll have to decide for yourself."

"Yes, I know," Glass agreed dismally. "I'll look around first. I'm obliged to you. You—you're sure you won't have a drink? No. Well, I guess I'll go in and write a letter to my wife. I write to her twice a week. I'll see you later, maybe."

Casey nodded, glad to be rid of him. He put his feet on the rail and proceeded to go through his correspondence, which, though bulky, was not especially important.

"The mails would be a whole lot lighter if it wasn't for fake oil and cement propositions and special offers of the world's best authors," he grumbled. "Promoters and publishers seem to consider the small post office the natural breeding ground for suckers. Maybe they're right, too. Hello! Here's something different."

It was a large, square, white envelope, perfectly plain, but of aristocratic finish and thickness.

"Wedding—for the drinks!" growled Casey. "Not so different, after all." He ripped it open ruthlessly with his thumb. "Here's where I get set back a few dollars starting another domestic plant. Blamed if it's any better than—hello!"

It was not a wedding announcement. Instead, it was a check. The amount thereof was the surprising sum of eighty cents, exchange added; and the signature, firm, square, clear-cut as lettering, was "*Clyde Burnaby*."

"Now what the devil?" Casey exclaimed, and jerked out the accompanying letter.

It was merely a short, friendly note. Miss Burnaby inclosed her check for one year's interest, at eight per cent, on the loan from Mr. Dunne. She referred to the Wades. Gave an item or two of unimportant personal news. Hoped that his ranch was flourishing, and that he was well; and was his very cordially.

In feminine fashion followed a postscript:

Kitty Wade tells me that you are having trouble with some company which is taking water that you need for your ranch. I hope it isn't serious trouble, though she hinted as much. Do you care to tell me about it?

Casey Dunne sat for some minutes, the check and letter across his knees, while he gazed unblinkingly through the hot sunshine. It was some time since he had given Clyde Burnaby more than an occasional thought; his immediate affairs had been too pressing. Now the vision of her, as he had seen her last, rose before his eyes, and he found it a pleasant recollection.

He looked at the check lying on his knee, and laughed at the idea of interest on ten dollars. He had forgotten all about that conceit, but she had not. He would frame the check—yes, that was what he would do. In time there would be quite a bunch of them—that is, if she remembered to send them. Well, anyway, he would have to acknowledge it, and he might as well do it at once.

He went indoors and began to write. He had intended but a brief note, but in construction it lengthened. With him letter writing was never an effort. He wrote as easily as he talked, colloquially, without any attempt at style or set phrase. Soon he found himself tersely describing the water situation, forecasting the probabilities. As these were not too cheering, he frowned and added an optimistic sentence or two for general effect. He concluded with a hope that she would some time honor his country with a visit, when his ranch and all it contained—including its owner—would be entirely at her service.

On his way to post the letter he passed Glass, still struggling with his own composition. That poor devil! A perfect type of incompetent. He was too

slow and timid for the West—too old to learn the lessons of self-reliance and adaptability of a new land. However, that was his own affair. If he would work he could make a living, and that was all that he or those like him could make anywhere.

Dunne strolled down to the station to mail his letter in the box there; and, as he turned the corner of the building, he came full upon Farwell and another burly individual in conversation with Quilty, the station agent.

"Tell them to start a tracer from the other end after those car numbers," Farwell was commanding; "and you start one from here. I've got to have them right away; work's at a standstill. Those cursed fatheads in the freight department don't know enough to shovel ballast. Get after them with a sharp stick."

"I'll do me best for ye," Quilty promised; "but freight on this line comes whin ut comes."

"It will come when I want it, or somebody will lose a job," said Farwell. "I'm not the ordinary consignee, and you can tell them that, too." With which he turned and walked away with his companion.

"Pleasant gentleman, Corney!" Casey ventured.

The little station agent winked. "Th' black dog is on him sure enough," he observed. "Since his dam was blowed up, he has th' civil word for nobody. Listen, now, Casey. Somebody will pay for that night's work."

"I don't quite get you, Corney."

"Oh, divil th' fear iv yez not gettin' me. I'm not speakin' now in me official capacity; for praise God this dam is outside th' duties iv me jurisdiction. I'm tellin' ye as a friend."

"I know, Corney; but tell me a little plainer."

"Plainer is ut? Yez are a man grown. Do yez think yez can crim'nally an' wid conthributory vilence aforethought dynymite me employers' property, an' no comeback at all? Have sinse!"

"Hold on," said Casey. "Go slow, Corney." But Mr. Quilty dismissed this preliminary objection with a wave of his hand.

"Thim's figgers iv speech. I assume yez are innocent until yez are caught. Faix, it's not me'd give th' hot tip iv a warnin' to a crim'nal. But whisper, now! Th' comp'ny is for siftin' this, outrageous outrage to th' bottom, an' then liftin' th' bottom to look under it. Havin' put its hand to th' plow, it will l'ave no stone unturned to probe th' mysthry. Ye seen that felly wid Farwell. He's th' railway detective!"

"Meaning that they're out to round up somebody, eh?" said Casey. "All right, Corney; let 'em go to it."

"In me official capacity," said Mr. Quilty, looking him sternly in the eye, "I hope that th' dirty blagyards is caught red-handed and soaked hard for th' shameless and di'bolical atrocity they have perpetuated. For such abandoned miscreants hangin' is too ladylike a punishment. I want yez to understand me official sentiments in me official capacity clearly. Yez may quote me exact words if ye feel so disposed."

"In your official capacity," said Casey, "your official sentiments do you great credit."

"I'm glad ye think so," said Mr. Quilty; "for in me private capacity, speakin' widout prejudice to me salary and as a true son iv dear, ould, dirty Dublin to a friend, me private sintimints is these: Th' man that invinted dynymite should have a set iv goold medals th' size iv a compound's dhrevin' wheels. But if iver ye mintion me private sintimints to a soul, I'll have yer life!"



The Tyranny of Fear

By Morgan Robertson

Author of "When Jack Comes Home from Sea," "The Pirates," Etc.

Said his captain: "Mackaye fears nothing that lives or breathes or moves." The captain was wrong. Mackaye did fear something that moved—the big, heaving green seas that hit the ship and sometimes boarded her. His is not an isolated case by any means. There are many sailors who spend their lives at sea and who yet are afraid of the water.

ELEPHANTS, able to crush the life out of all living creatures, are afraid of mice and small dogs. Small dogs, yapping, insulting, and insolent, fear only their mistresses; or, in case they find masters, they fears these masters. Big tomcats fear small dogs, even though able to kill them with a bite. Bengal tigers, able to kill a lion in a fight, fear water, and in a rainstorm flee to shelter. A big, fat woman fears a mouse, like the elephant, and at its appearance will mount a chair, and shriek for protection from the weakling husband whom she would defend from a burglar. The husband, equal to a fist fight with a fellow not too large, fears his wife. The burglar, willing to risk life and liberty on a "job," fears the police; and the police fear their superiors. The mouse fears the cat, the cat fears the dog, the dog fears its master or mistress, the mistress fears the master, and the master fears the mistress. In the light of these conceptions, it seems that courage is not a positive quality, but that this definition of positiveness should be given to its antithesis—fear. For there are sailors, who spend their lives at sea, who fear the water.

Spencer Mackaye was such a man.

He was born with a horror of water, and, though of a good family, that de-

creed morning baths, he never took his bath as a baby without squalling protests. He hated the sound and the touch and the feel of cold water, and only when he was dried off did he recover tranquillity of mind. Water was his foe, his enemy, and only as he could escape from it did he progress in mental development. When old enough to decide, he took his baths warm.

But he progressed. He was a brilliant schoolboy; he easily led his fellows in schoolboy games; he thrashed every bully that came into contact with him, and stood—at about nineteen—as a promising youth, able to fight, and win, in the battle of life. But he was a younger son of a proud family, and the family dictum was that Spencer would go to sea as an apprentice in an English ship. He himself would have decided differently, but the united family influence overcame him, and he packed his outfit.

His outfit included a brass-bound uniform which he was only supposed to wear when on shore in a foreign port—to uphold the prestige of the ship and the house that owned her. On board, he wore dungaree trousers and jacket, scoured brasswork, scrubbed paintwork, and had his hands in the tar bucket oftener than he liked, until he had so far progressed as to make

the tar bucket an adjunct to seamanly work. He was intelligent, and learned rapidly; and long before he had completed his four years' course of apprenticeship he was a skilled master of the marlinespike and serving mallet, besides being an efficient helmsman.

He could send down a royal yard, or cross it; he could pass a weather or lee earing with the best of able seamen; he was first at a rope, first in the rigging to go aloft, first to answer a call from an officer, and quick to resent a slight or indignity. As instance, a newly shipped second mate, who "deviled" him, was soundly thrashed in a few moments before the amused captain and first officer.

The captain liked him, and was proud of him. "He fears nothing that lives or breathes or moves," he said to his chagrined second mate. "Let him alone."

But the young fellow did fear something that moved—the big, heaving green seas that hit the ship and sometimes boarded her. He admitted this fear to no one, only showing by his insistent desire to change his shoes and socks when he got his feet wet that he disliked contact with water. And after a time—after three years of apprenticeship, when the dogwatch school in navigation had completed him to the skipper's satisfaction—he was forced to admit to himself that he feared something else that lived and breathed and moved.

This something was Ben Brill, a fellow apprentice, bigger than himself, whom he had soundly thrashed on the first voyage, but who would not stay thrashed.

Ben was big; and, being big, was somewhat slow in his movements; hence his thrashing. Also, Ben was a little slower than Spencer in his mental processes; hence Spencer distanced him in the study of navigation. But Ben, in the dogwatch conversation, would glower over the brilliant younger son of a proud family, and somehow, and in some way, reduce him to silence. Ben mastered navigation in due time, and was always the equal of

Spencer in seamanship—only the matter of fistic skill rendering one better than the other.

But fistic skill matters but little in a real exigency. Once on the forecastle deck, when the watch was pulling down the flying jib, and the ship spooning up cold, solid seas, the downhaul fouled with a fold of the slack canvas dragged into the block on the jib boom.

"Get out there, one o' you, and clear that downhaul," yelled the mate from the main deck.

Spencer was ahead of them all, the nearest man to the knightheads; Ben was next to him; and behind him the others, older men, but less efficient than these two expert apprentices. It is a canon of seamanship that the nearest man to the rail or rigging must be the one to jump at an order to leave the deck, and also that he must not delay to shed encumbering oilskins so that the next man may pass him. Spencer did not delay on account of his oilskins; he merely waited a second or two while a big moving hill of water hit the bow and nearly climbed on board; then he felt Ben's knee between his shoulder blades, and was borne to the deck by his weight.

Ben stepped over him, climbed out, and cleared the downhaul, and was completely immersed three times before, by the exercise of all his strength, he came back to the comparative safety of the forecastle deck. Then, when the sail was down, he went out again with two others, and stowed it. But one of these was Spencer, humiliated, and enraged with himself and with Ben, but menacingly quiet.

They had it out in the next watch below—Spencer quietly furious, Ben confident and calm. Ben smiled as he spoke, and told Spencer that he was a coward—afraid of the sea. Spencer retaliated with a challenge to fight, which Ben responded to with an offer to measure strength—that is, the pressure of arm against arm with elbows planted on a table. Spencer declined, because he knew that in a contest of brute strength Ben could master him. They came to no blows, but the result

was that Spencer hated Ben the more for his bulldog pertinacity, and that Ben hated Spencer the more for his inherent superiority in mental attributes.

And so they finished their apprenticeship with the same skipper, at the end of which Spencer was signed on as first officer of a big four-masted English ship, and Ben Brill as second.

The skipper knew nothing of the hatred existing between his two mates, and when he brought his daughter aboard for the voyage, introduced them both to her with a father's confidence that each would act the gentleman. But—leaving aside the case of sons, daughters, and mothers—fathers are notorious fools. Spencer Mackaye and Ben Brill so proved it.

Madge was about eighteen, but from some inward lack of physical function her hair was gray as a grandmother's. Yet with eyes of the same color, complexion almost tawny from sun and wind, Grecianlike features, and the figure of a Venus, she was a lovely and lovable girl, able to command attention in any society in the world; yet in this big ship full of men she ignored the attentions of the only two who, besides her father, were on her social and intellectual plane, and bestowed her smiles and sympathy on Sam Cotton, an underbred, fat, and backward youth, who, after five voyages, had not graduated from the apprentice class.

Cotton was thick-skinned and thick-skulled, and never in his life had given voice to an original thought or idea; but he could laugh, and his laugh was contagious. It saved him from many a thrashing, and in personal friction with his fellows served him in lieu of courage; for who could quarrel with a fellow who answered every challenge and insult with a laugh?

He was in the first mate's watch, and only came into contact with the second mate when all hands were on deck; then big Ben Brill often put the fear of God and man into him, but to little result. Sam would go to the first mate for sympathy, and receive it, for Spen-

cer, more diplomatic than Ben, favored the favorite of the girl he had fallen in love with.

It is needless to say that Ben was in the same state of mind; but as for Sam, to love a girl was beyond his mental capacity, though he would step in where angels feared to tread. Once in his watch below, abaft the apprentices' house, he grabbed and kissed the captain's daughter; and Spencer looked on from the poop deck, and did nothing. Ben, looking on from the main deck, crashed his big fist into Sam's face; whereupon the girl fled to the forward companion. Later she informed Ben that he was not a gentleman, and he ground his teeth, while Spencer, who had listened, smiled sweetly, and comforted Sam.

Ben had answered: "Yes, but whenever I catch a man insulting you I'll smash him, even though I'm no gentleman. I love you—that's all."

Spencer was not so candid. He did not speak of the incident to the girl, but mildly admonished Sam, and was answered by a laugh.

Sam had no pronounced congenital fears. He was the kind of whom we say that "he knows nothing, and fears nothing." Sam would flee from pain or discomfort, but would return with no lesson learned. And Ben Brill had no congenital fears, or phobias; his courage and manhood, like his education, navigation, and seamanship, were acquired painfully, but so acquired to remain.

Spencer Mackaye, on the contrary, conversationally brilliant, handsome in the eyes of women, master of his profession and his job—with only his one deadly fear to stultify him—in time won the regard of the splendid, but unformed, girl; and Sam was banished from the dogwatch conversations.

Ben also was banished—in fact, had never been admitted; but their common condition brought no sympathy of soul between Ben Brill and Sam Cotton. Ben harrowed the limited soul of Sam when he got in his way, and Sam responded by futile complaints to the first mate—futile now because Sam's

usefulness was past. So the girl thought that she loved Spencer, and Spencer really loved the girl up to the limits of his limited nature. Sam relapsed into fat sulks, while Ben Brill glowered and cursed and fumed, losing many hours of necessary sleep in his watch below, thinking of the gray-haired girl that he wanted so much.

The captain knew nothing of these warring mental states; but, safe from the Channel and the Bay of Biscay, sank back among his books, leaving the navigation of the ship to his mate.

Spencer was competent; he took the ship along the zigzag track down the two Atlantics, and off the River Plata ran into the usual gale of wind. It was a fierce blow, dead out of the Antarctic, cold and wet, with occasional squalls that flattened the heaving seas to a level surface of white froth, and sang through the rigging with the song of the wind down a New England farmhouse chimney.

All hands, even to the captain and cook, were required; but they finally got the ship under lower topsails, reefed spanker, and fore-topmast stay-sail. Then, with ropes coiled up, the watch went below; but the skipper, the two mates, and even Madge—clad in a warm mackintosh—remained on deck. For who could sleep except weary sailors and men of the Sam Cotton type? Sam turned in, and slept soundly, as did most of the foremast hands; but in the case of the skipper, his daughter, and his two mates, the case was different; they had nerves, and their nerves tormented them.

Though Ben was officer of the deck, with Spencer up, he remained in a secondary capacity, while the captain, with full confidence in his efficient first officer, stood with Madge near the wheel, leaving the handling of the ship to Spencer.

Clad in long oilskin coat, sou'wester, and hip rubber boots, Spencer paced back and forth on the poop deck, clear of the seas that occasionally climbed over the weather rail; while Ben, equally well clad, paced the main deck just abaft the men of the watch, and with

them received these seas down his neck and into his boots. Now and then Spencer would roar out an order, and Ben and the men would obey it, while Madge's eyes would glisten with admiration for her lover, and the captain would nod approval.

At midnight the violence of the wind had lessened, but from this alone the seas had increased, so that one deluge after another broke over the weather rail. The ship was laboring too heavily, and Spencer decreed the taking in of the fore and mizzen lower topsails, the latter first. To furl a lower topsail in a heavy gale requires all hands available; so the carpenter and sailmaker, steward and cook were called from sleep and sent aloft after clewing up, with Ben in the bunt to oversee the job. It was accomplished successfully, and they came down from the mizzen to clew up and furl the fore-topsail, with green seas breaking over their heads.

They got the clews up and the buntlines taut, then climbed aloft to furl, leaving no man on deck but the captain and Spencer, both high and dry on the poop. All hands on the weather yardarm got that side of the sail up to the yard and well secured; then they all slid over to leeward. But here they found trouble; the wind had blown the slackened canvas over, and a huge bunch of it was bound tightly by the lee inner buntline, under the yard. With all their strength, and all together—as many men as could clutch the wet, stiff canvas—they could not lift it to the yard.

"On deck!" roared Ben from the bunt. "Slack away the lee inner buntline."

"Furl that sail!" answered Spencer from the house, in a voice as loud as Ben's.

"Better slack it away a little, Mr. Mackaye," suggested the captain.

But Spencer looked at the water-washed main deck, and, without answering the captain, roared out again: "Furl that sail, and bear a hand."

"Can't budge it," answered Ben angrily. "Slack away the lee inner bunt-

line, Mr. Mackaye. We can't reach a gasket round it."

Spencer again looked at the flooded deck, waist-deep to leeward with cold, swirling water; and the captain looked keenly at Spencer, but said no more. Instead, he left Madge clinging to the wheel-box grating, passed along to the poop steps, and descended into the maelstrom. He might have taken the wheel himself, and sent the helmsman, but possibly thought to shame his first officer.

The buntlines were belayed to the fore life rail, and the captain—an old man, and slow in his movements—had a mighty struggle with the seas to get there; but he reached the spot, and was about to cast off the turns when the ship dipped her nose, and a huge liquid hill lifted over the weather rail and passed on over the lee. With it went the captain, helpless in his long yellow oilskin coat and hip boots, and too choked with water to even call out. But Ben, looking down from above, saw the yellow spot on the darkness of the sea, and sang out:

"Man overboard! Down from aloft, everybody!"

Then he clambered into the rigging, slid down the topmast backstay to the deck, and shed his boots and coat. Then, before the next man had reached the deck, he had made a bowline in the end of the lee fore brace, and sprung overboard, swimming toward the drifting spot of yellow. Madge, too, had seen, and, with a piercing scream, had started to descend the steps, but was restrained by Spencer, who also had seen.

"Nothing can be done," he said, his own fear of the sea extending to fear for her. "We have no headway, and will drift down upon him."

But he was wrong, for the man at the wheel was Sam Cotton, and though he had no right to either luff or pay-off without orders, he did the latter in a purblind desire to steer the ship nearer the captain. As a result, she gathered headway, and with more seas climbing on board to embarrass the men, she dragged the whole length of

the fore brace taut while Ben was still within a fathom's reach of the drowning captain.

"Cast the brace off the pin, and give me slack!" called Ben, his voice coming up the wind faint as a child's. "The yard don't need the lee brace."

But the men, half drowned themselves, were clinging to belaying pins, and running gear, or else floating about trying to seize something fixed and fast. But Madge heard, and, being a sailor's daughter of many voyages, knew what Ben wanted. She broke away from Spencer, darted down the steps, and fought her way forward to the topsail brace belaying pin—with better luck than might have been expected.

It took all her strength to drag Ben to windward the necessary inch or two which enabled her to cast off the turns, but she did so, and the bight of the brace went in air, Ben now hanging from the yardarm. But it was too late. By the time the brace had again tautened the yellow spot had disappeared, and, as Ben felt himself dragged along by the ship's headway, he called out:

"Haul in. Go aloft, some o' you, and swifter the brace inboard."

Only Spencer heard Ben, but the men heard Spencer, and at his order—given in a quavering voice—they obeyed him; all but one or two, who assisted the half-drowned, half-mad, half-fainting girl aft to the cabin. The others, with a reef earring—a length of strong rope—passed around the now taut brace, hauled the bight in to the rigging, and thence to the deck, where they belayed it, and hauled up Ben, more dead than alive. He, too, needed assistance to the cabin, and while he was changing to dry clothing the men, of their own initiative, loosened the buntline, and finished tying up the topsail.

But not a man among them but knew that the ship had payed off, and that the kindly old skipper's death was caused by the increased headway. As Ben, clad in an overcoat and sea boots—for his oilskins were gone—climbed

to the poop, they came aft in a body, and the leaders half climbed the steps.

"Why," demanded the infuriated Ben of the demoralized first mate, "did you put the wheel up, instead of holding your luff?"

"I didn't," answered Spencer. "I didn't give an order to the wheel."

"Then you," said Ben, turning upon Sam, "you let her swing off?"

"I couldn't help it, sir," answered Sam, not so much from a desire to shield the first mate as to protect himself from censure. "I had the wheel hard down all the time."

"Don't lie!" thundered Ben. "I know this ship and her ways. But why," he demanded of Spencer, "did you let an old man go down into that bathtub to be washed overboard? I sang out to you, not to the captain."

"He got ahead of me," stuttered Spencer. "I was about to go."

Neither had seen that Madge, still drenched and disheveled, had appeared in the after companion, and was listening; and neither had noticed the group of angry men at the steps, who were waiting only for a sign or a signal from Ben to act. It was Madge, however, who furnished it; she came out to the deck, and faced Spencer.

"You coward!" she said vehemently. "Oh, you coward! You allowed my father to go to his death, too old and weak to save himself. My father!" she wailed. "Oh, my father!"

"But it was not my fault, Madge," said Spencer deprecatingly. "Had I gone myself, it would have been me instead of him."

"No," she answered; "you are young and strong—stronger than I am, and I went safely. Mr. Brill," she added firmly, turning to Ben, "my father was managing owner of this ship, and I am his only heir and representative. Will you deprive Mr. Mackaye of command, and take the ship to port yourself?"

"Yes, yes!" shouted the men at the steps. "Put the bloomin' swine in irons! He isn't fit to run a wheelbarrow, let alone a ship. Lock him up! Put 'im 'fore the mast with us. We'll

tend to 'im. Take charge, Mr. Brill, an' we'll stand by yer."

"Silence!" roared Ben, snatching a belaying pin from the mizzen pin rail. "You're talking mutiny. Down off those steps with you—all of you! Go forward, or I'll send you feet first!"

They backed down and retreated. But one voice among them said: "Send him forrard with us, sir. We want him. We just want him with us."

"On with you, and no more talk!" answered Ben, following them halfway down the steps. Then he returned to the two, and said:

"What you suggest, Miss Madge, is illegal and impossible. It would be rank mutiny. An owner at sea cannot deprive a captain of command, but a captain can iron an owner, or reduce an officer subordinate to himself. Mr. Mackaye is now captain of this ship, with full power to send me before the mast if he so wishes—only," he said to Spencer, "I foresee trouble for you if you do. In any event, I shall enter complaint against you for criminal negligence of duty at the first port we reach."

"I have no such intention," answered Spencer, utterly subdued by the attitude of Madge and the men. "No matter what you do in the future, I will need your services until we reach port. Then, if you wish, you may complain."

"Very well," said Ben. "And now, Miss Madge, please go below, change your clothes, and turn in. Nothing can be done now except to take care of the ship."

Shivering with cold, clinging to the mizzen rigging, and weeping passionately, she yielded to Ben's touch on her arm, and suffered him to lead her to the companion; but she had no sooner descended than there was a succession of crashing sounds from the darkness forward, and the flapping of the maintopsail as the wind caught it aback and pressed it to the mast.

Sam, at the wheel, in the effort to redeem himself, had hugged the wind too closely, and the ship, partly from a sudden change in the wind—for they were near the storm center—was "in

irons," head to sea, and plunging viciously, which motion had brought down the fore and mizzen royal masts, yards and all.

With such scant canvas on the ship, nothing could be done but to brace the main yard for the other tack, and trim the staysail and spanker sheets, ready for wearing ship later on; but before the work was commenced Sam went off the poop at the end of Ben's fist, while another and better helmsman had the wheel.

They wore ship in time, and brought back to the original tack; but in securing the fallen spars they discovered that one had smashed the three boats on the forward house, and the other two on the skids amidships, leaving but one intact—a small quarter boat hanging to its davits abaft the mizzen rigging. At daylight the carpenter inspected the damaged boats, and reported them beyond repair outside of a dockyard. Where keels were not broken, ribs and planking were smashed in for half their length. He also reported something else equally disquieting—six inches of wet on the sounding rod.

A leak in a wooden ship will sometimes close itself when wind and sea have subsided; but a leak in an iron ship is like a hole in a tin pan—it must be found, and closed with tools and materials. But at sea, with a hold full of cargo, a leak cannot be found except in one way, and that way is to "thrum" a sail, weight its edges, and, with strong ropes from each corner, pass it under the bottom, and, by shifting back and forth, and forward and aft, while the pumps are going, to judge by the sounding rod just when the canvas and rope-yarn thrums have been sucked into the hole.

Spencer and his watch, including Sam Cotton—aching in all his bones from contact with his shipmates' fists and boots—had gone below at four o'clock; but on the carpenter's report Ben had started the flywheel pump amidships, only to find after an hour of pumping that the water had gained two inches.

Then he applied the only remedy, and when the watch turned out at breakfast time a thrummed topgallant-sail was being slipped back and forth by four of the weary men, while the rest pumped, and the carpenter, chalking the rod and line for each dip, stood by the sounding well.

But the water gained, and Spencer and Ben had a conference, the result of which was a decision to run into Montevideo. So they wore ship again, and, with the lessening of the gale about two points free, shaped a course into the big river, while the pumping was resumed. As one watch was enough for the pump, Ben and his side went below for a few hours' necessary sleep; but at noon, when they turned out for dinner, fourteen inches showed on the rod. The thrummed sail had not yet found the leak.

At four in the afternoon there was three feet of water in the hold, and, though the wind had died down enough to warrant the setting of all topsails and the two inner jibs, yet the lower draft of the leaking ship kept the main deck flooded, and made harder work for the pumpers; for every few strokes must be exerted against a downward pressure of water in the pump buckets. All hands were now kept up—even the battered and disfigured Sam, who had kept to his bunk all day until routed out by Ben—and were put to the pumps.

At nightfall they put on all the canvas they had spars for, and the pumping continued, while they patiently maneuvered the thrummed sail back and forth in the effort to find the leak. At midnight the carpenter reported six feet of water, and Ben sought the poop, where Spencer was still pacing back and forth, nominally the commander of the ship. Madge had gone below, and Ben spoke freely.

"This ship will not float three hours longer, sir," he said; "and, as I judge, we are about fifty miles from the coast. Have you anything to suggest?"

"No," answered Spencer sullenly, "I have not, except to find the leak, and stop the inflow."

"Very well, sir," said Ben; "but I will suggest that while you are idle you water and provision the quarter boat for the benefit of Miss Madge. We fellows are born to be drowned; that is what we sign for, and what we all expect. But she can be saved. Have the boat ready, sir, and get her into it before we go down. It will only hold two people. Go yourself, and take care of her."

"That is a good idea," answered Spencer. "Send Sam aft here to help."

So Sam was relieved from the pumps, and he and Spencer passed up and down from the steward's storeroom to the boat, while Ben went back among the men. Once as he passed near the forward companion he saw Madge looking out the half-opened door, and ventured to speak to her.

"You must get on your warmest clothing, Miss Madge," he said, "and be ready to get into the quarter boat if the ship sinks. The mate will take care of you."

"Thank you," she answered; but made no movement toward following his directions. She remained in the companion, watching the men, and listening to Ben's voice, hoarse and weak now, but still uttering encouraging admonitions.

One bell struck at the wheel; then two, and three; then, with the water washing the men away from the pump cranks, the carpenter sang out:

"In the name of Heaven, Mr. Brill, we're gaining on it! There's only five feet on the line. We've found the leak!"

They cheered and hurrahed, and struggled again with the pump cranks; but they cheered so noisily that it was some moments before the voice of the man at the wheel could be heard distinctly. Then they made out what he was saying.

"They've gone with the boat, sir!" he sang out. "They just lowered it—just now—and let the falls unreeve."

Ben mounted the poop steps in two bounds, and looked. A hundred yards

astern was a white spot on the blackness of the sea.

"Boat ahoy!" he shouted. "Come back! We've found the leak. Come back!"

But there was no answer, and even though Ben backed the main yards to wait for the boat, it did not return. Slowly the white spot grew gray and smaller, and finally disappeared in the darkness. But he kept the ship hove to until daylight; then, against the grumbled protest of the men, squared away on the back track, and to leeward of it. But when he saw a white quarter boat upside down on the still heaving and foam-crested sea, he resumed his course. And his agony of mind was relieved when he saw Madge emerge from the companion at seven bells.

Ben stood both watches until he had docked the ship at Montevideo—a matter of forty-eight hours; then, with the sound of the dry-dock pumps in his ears, he turned in, and slept for about twenty. When he awoke, he dressed, shaved, and washed the sleep from his eyes, but not from his brain, for a man does not thoroughly awaken with the mere opening of his eyes. So when he stepped out into the companion, and met Madge, he was more groggy and stupid than when he had turned in. But the girl was wide awake, and half smiling.

"Mr. Brill," she said, "I have been ashore and cabled to the other owners—it cost me a lot of money—and they ratify my request. We all appoint you captain of this ship."

She held out several cablegrams to him.

"But," he stammered, drawing back, "I don't want—I want to be skipper, of course—but I don't want your ship without—without—"

"Without what?" she asked gravely.

"Without you," he managed to say.

Her grave expression changed to the sweetest of smiles, and she placed both hands on his big shoulders.

The Higher Law

By George Pattullo

Author of "The Highhandedness of Steamboat Bill," "The Jail Delivery at Windy," Etc.

How the higher law put an end to the Bill Green County war—a typical cowland feud; the kind that has retarded the Southwest a quarter century in its development

IF, when stooping for a drink of water, a man's hat is sent spinning by a bullet, he will not unnaturally incline to the suspicion that somebody is trying to hurt him.

Buck Cade was on his knees at a ford of the San Pedro when this befell, and he promptly spread out flat on the sand. Immediately a horseman emerged from a clump of cottonwoods across the river and advanced with caution, as though fearful of ambush. Whereupon the foxy Cade turned on his side and sent a forty-five whining across the shallows. It spurted sand into the air close to the right of the rider, who wheeled and scurried off at top speed, plying a quirt lustily. Cade tried again, but the cartridge jammed. He was much disappointed, because the fugitive was "the Gopher," and the Gopher was the brains of the Price faction.

As a happening, this would be unworthy of note except for its significance in the Bill Green County war, which was a typical cowland feud; one of the kind that has retarded the Southwest a quarter century in its development.

This was the manner of its beginning: For four years, Price, of the Fork, persistently broke a binding obligation of the open range country—he did not supply his quota of bulls. Three times other owners drew attention to this neglect—the third time peremptorily—and thrice did he give them riddling words. A career of hard dealing had

taught Price that a waiting game is the hardest to beat and of greatest profit, and so he never acted unless forced to it.

As a first step in forcing, Cash Cade of the Gourd took ten of his riders and cut a drift fence which Price had caused to be erected. Eleven miles he cut, and, in wanton mischief, ran the cattle off in all directions. Retaliation was prompt. The Fork gunman shot and killed a cowboy of Cade's outfit in a dispute over a motherless calf, thereby making a sonless mother, and the sheriff of Bill Green refused to arrest him, a grand jury declined to indict, having regard for their skins and homes, and he went brazenly at large. Old Cade's quick wrath was fearful to see. Pounding the table where he ate with his men, he swore an oath that he would even the score.

All of which was very hard upon the twenty-year-old son and heir of the Gourd. For, ere this feud arose, Buck Cade had worn a private trail to the Fork headquarters, because Marylee Price was at the other end. Neither father frowned on his coming and going. Each was secretly pleased, reckoning united interests which would be great enough to dominate the country. And nobody who ever saw Marylee wondered that Buck should ride thirty miles twice weekly. The two had been playmates together, combatants in grass fights. Marylee had flirted outrageously with another boy because Buck danced five times with Laura Turner at

a barbecue; and she was ever shy as a wild thing with him. When she grew to womanhood, everybody thought that they would marry. Then Cash Cade lost his temper with the owner of the Fork; hot words ended in a rupture; and, when next Buck alighted from his horse at the Price headquarters, the cowman was there to receive him instead of Marylee.

"I'm sorry, Buck," said Price. "I ain't got nothing against you, mind. But no Gourd man is welcome around here any more."

Buck did not attempt argument or persuasion. He turned around and ambled homeward, troubled in mind. There followed the sterner measures of such wars, culminating in the killing.

"Buck," said his father, "you're boss here now. Take to that bunch and clean 'em."

The son answered reluctantly:

"I'd rather keep out of it."

"You can't," cried his father, on fire at once. "It's dog eat dog. My enemies are yours, ain't they? So forget Marylee."

"All right," said Buck, for sake of peace.

Two days later his horse nibbled the short grass under the willows at the Wolf Place, and a buckskin pony grazed near him. Inside the ruined, roofless adobe house stood Buck and Marylee, saying a good-by which neither wholly meant—hands gripped, stammering and staring. Came the swash of horses' feet through sand, and a party of Fork men, bound for the border to receive a herd at a customs entry, loped from the river bed. Marylee heard them first, and thrust him through a paneless window. They saw and knew him, and Buck fled. He leaped his horse straight off an eight-foot bluff, and swam the San Pedro, and escaped.

That ill-considered meeting had stunning results. Before the young boss of the Gourd had slept over the problem of his future course, Price had a tramp Campbellite parson at the Fork, and his daughter Marylee was wedded to the Gopher. This with an indecent haste.

A messenger bore formal notification to Cade.

The next night was one of moist blackness. When it was yet young, a party of men silently raided Fork headquarters and burned the corrals and stables, with all the winter's feed therein, making off without encountering any resistance, so abrupt was their onslaught. That same evening, Buck Cade and a bunch of his followers played pitch in a saloon at Blackwater, with the sheriff sitting in the game, which was in itself a sufficient alibi, had one been required. It is true that rumors piped up and down to the effect that the Gourd horses tethered outside during the game were in a shocking lather; but fires always give rise to malicious gossip.

Young Cade went alone on a sunshiny afternoon down to the same ford at which the Gopher had waylaid him, to ascertain whether his orders that a bogged cow should be dug out had been obeyed. They had not. Impatient of slow digging in sucking sand, the cowboys had dragged the creature out at the end of a rope, thereby effectually breaking her neck. She was lying on her side, breathing her last, and Buck shot her to put an end to her suffering. As he stood gazing at the carcass, a woman eased her horse down the opposite bank and waded into the stream. Preoccupied, he had not heard her coming.

"Hello!" he exclaimed.

"You'd make a poor outlaw," she said. "I done stole up on you."

It was an awkward situation, for this was Marylee, whom he had not glimpsed since her wedding. She let her horse drink, eying the ripples widening from his muzzle. Marylee's hair was of a tawny color and her eyes brown, with a certain somberness save when she smiled. Buck noted that this brooding quality was more pronounced than ever before. She was warmly red on face and neck.

"I was looking for my roan pony," she thought it necessary to explain. "He done run off yesterday, and all the boys are so busy, Ralph, he wouldn't send out for him."

Buck permitted himself a slow grin. The ford was well within Gourd domain; and he had a notion that none of the males of the Price outfit would be eager to hunt a stray in that direction. Suddenly he cried a warning to her.

"Look out. Your horse is bogging down, Marylee."

She jerked on the reins, and her pony struggled to extricate himself. It was too late; the river bed had him fast, and he but floundered the deeper. Cade jumped his horse across the stream and ranged close beside. Taking no chances of delay, he threw an arm around the Gopher's wife, lifted her from the saddle, and spurred out to the bank. There he set her down. Both were breathless; and yet Buck could wrestle down calves all morning without turning a hair.

"Oh, get him quick!" she pleaded.

He waded back, got his rope over the horn of her saddle with a double half hitch, and dragged the pony out by main force. When she had wrung the water from her drab riding skirt, the Gopher's wife climbed to his back.

"Well, I must be drifting," said she.

"Adios," Buck answered. "I reckon I'd best not go along with you. My health don't never seem so good on this side of the river as nearer home."

"It's a wonder," she said seriously, "you haven't been killed, Buck."

"It takes a man to kill me, and they ain't got one in your outfit."

Which was a callow, boastful speech. But the Gopher's wife allowed the left-handed slap to go unchallenged. Buck laughed, she smiled faintly, and they parted.

There was a peculiar aftermath to this chance encounter. Old man Cade was away, selling steers in the Middle West, and Buck occupied their house alone. It was situated about fifty paces from the sleeping quarters of the outfit. The second morning but one, he found, pinned to his door, a bit of coarse white paper. It was a note, scrawled, in pencil:

Your favor noted. I'll thank you in my own way.

Buck stuffed the paper into his waistband; nor did he make mention of it

to his men, holding it of small account. This was a trick characteristic of the Gopher—it was like him to warn and then pot a man from ambush, just for the pleasure of being certain that the victim would know whence the bullet came; for he was a subtle person, was the Gopher.

"Mit," said young Cade at dinner, "did you boys hear anybody round last night?"

"No-oo," replied the cook. "What's the matter, Buck?"

"Did anybody except the boys eat here last night?"

The cook reflected. He fed thirty men daily.

"There was that tow-headed kid from over beyond the Wolf place. Steen his name is. You know—that ol' nester's son."

"What was Steen doing here?"

"He just happened by, so I done asked him to take supper," said the cook. "What's got into you, anyhow, Buck? He went home before breakfast."

"Well," Cade answered, "the next time that kid shows his nose around here run him off. He's a dog-goned Price man."

This was no news to Mit; nevertheless he was very thoughtful as he mopped the table. For it was in his mind to caution Buck, by reason of rumors he had heard. He hovered near for several minutes, stealthily scanning Cade's face; but the men of cowland seldom intrude into personal affairs, even of their closest friends, nor offer advice that is not solicited. Moreover, it is usually hazardous to proffer suggestions where a woman is concerned; and the big, lank boss was not one to invite confidences or to make them. Therefore, the cook checked his friendly inclination, and Buck sallied out into the brilliant sunshine, and departed to inspect a windmill in a remote corner of his range.

The sun smote from a clear sky when he started; but, as he was wending back, cloud banks massed around the middle of the mountains, and within twenty minutes rain was pouring down in long,

stinging slants. It drove into the faces of horse and rider. His mount turned tail, refusing, even under the spur, to breast it; and Buck sought refuge behind the ruins of the Wolf Place.

A shrill neigh from a buckskin pony greeted his arrival there. And, crouched in a corner of the walls, was the Gopher's wife, also driven to shelter.

The downpour eased its first violence as abruptly as it had come, and the sun flashed on pools and sparkling grass. He dried her saddle, after a fashion, with his waistcoat, and helped her to mount. As he saw her wrists——

"Who did that?" he demanded.

There were blue-green wales on them. She put a hand hastily to her neck, and he descried the imprint of fingers there. She did not answer.

"Say the word," he said hoarsely, "and I'll take you away from him."

"Love, honor, and obey," she kept repeating, beginning to sob in hysteria. "Love, honor, and obey. Oh, let me go! Let me go!"

For a long minute he hesitated, watching her, in two minds what to do. Then he wheeled his horse and permitted her to pass.

"Good-by, Marylee."

"Good-by," she said. "We must never see each other again."

They rode in opposite directions. The rain recommenced in a fine drizzle, falling with a soft, mournful murmur.

"What's the matter, Buck?" Mit inquired. "Man, but you're solemn."

"Nothing," the boss replied. "Leave me be."

The cook appeared to be much relieved over his safe return. All the gossip of the ranges found its way to Mit sooner or later; and he was well aware that the Gopher patrolled the ridges daily, scanning like a sentinel for sign of Cade, that he might waylay him. Yet he made no reference to the fact.

"Ol' Buck knows it well enough," he told himself. "He knows that there ain't one of the whole bunch but'd like to get him. It ain't any of my business. Besides, it's like he'd tell me to shut up. No, sir. I'll just leave Buck alone."

That afternoon Cade sat solitary in the bunk house at the ranch. Entered Mit, ushering in a Mexican boy arrived with a letter from the Fork. It was a year since Salazar had dared appear on Gourd land, and he grinned nervously as he handed the missive to the silent boss. But he was untroubled by personal fears, for had he not been a highly pleased witness of Cade's wooing of Marylee a score of times? Indeed, one seldom saw her away from headquarters without Raphael tagging behind on his scrawny, tough pony.

"Any answer, Raphael?" Buck asked, fingering the envelope before he opened it.

"Me, I dunno. Perhaps yes—perhaps no." And Salazar smiled brilliantly.

The boss motioned to Mit to take him away, and Raphael hit the homeward trail without further parley.

The note had no beginning; also, it was unsigned, but unmistakably in her handwriting. Buck could have told that at ten yards' distance.

"They've locked me up. Ralph says I'm crazy. He knows about your coming to the Wolf Place that day; and he's done persuaded all of them that I'm crazy, too. Anyhow, they pretend they think so; and they're fixing to send me away, perhaps to an asylum. For God's sake, come to me. Come and get me out of here."

Now, it is customary for the actors of our stage to portray deep emotion by facial contortion, and often violent gesture. As a matter of fact, when a man receives a stunning shock, he is very apt to stand quite still, sometimes wearing a rather foolish expression. Buck held himself motionless after he had read. Thus he remained a long time, staring down at the letter. Once the cook looked in to see what effect the message had had on him—looked and hastily withdrew.

Shortly after sundown Cade saddled Waspnest and rode off. He went alone, heading toward the fringe of hills to the west, which was the most direct route to the Fork. Most of his outfit were rounding up beef cattle in remote fast-

nesses of the Dragoons; but it was not their assistance he sought. Had they been at headquarters he could not have taken them. This was a personal mission, his own private quarrel; and he would ask no man to imperil himself in it. Moreover, sentiment is such in the cow country that no interference in marital difficulties is countenanced, however pressing the need, whatever appeal for help is made. They hold to it that a man's wife is his; and, so long as the marriage tie endures, no one may step between. So Buck Cade set out, unsupported, on his errand.

A lamp was burning in a bedroom window of the Gopher's house, set on the sill. The shade was up, and, as Cade trod lightly from out the shadow of the new corrals, he could see Marylee in a chair by the table. Her head was down on her arms, and she seemed to be asleep. There was a noise of talk and laughter from the Fork bunk house, where some men played at cards and one scraped on a fiddle. But around Price's and the Gopher's abodes absolute stillness reigned. He raised himself on tiptoe in the soft earth beneath her window and scratched on the pane. The first time there was no movement. Buck scratched again. Marylee lifted her head slowly. Buck smiled at her and nodded, moving his lips.

At the same instant a man sprang out of the darkness and grappled Cade from behind, his right hand under Buck's chin. A knee smashed into the small of his back, stunning him. Buck wrenched half free and tried for his gun; but a second assailant hurled himself forward, and he was borne to the ground, fighting tooth and nail.

"Don't kill him, Sam," the Gopher panted. "Him—and me—we've got to talk first. Mind that knife."

A long, voiceless struggle, straining breath and sudden lurchings, then quiet—and the Gourd boss was trussed up like a calf for the branding. They carried him into the blacksmith shop and set him on a stool, his bound hands behind him. There the Gopher lighted a lantern and placed it on a bench, in such position that Cade's face was thrown

into strong relief. After that Marylee's husband planted himself in front, with legs wide apart, and leered at him.

"You can go back now, Sam," he said to his helper. "Don't say nothing to the boys. I've got some business to settle with this fine gen'l'man."

"Best to watch him right smart. Gee, but he's sure stout!" the other cautioned.

Then he went out, albeit reluctantly, shutting the door carefully behind him. As he departed, he wondered what he would do were he in the Gopher's place.

"Pshaw! He don't deserve no better," he said. "Crackee, but that Cade is sure some man!"

There was no smile on the Gopher's lips as he listened to the retreating steps. They ceased. The two were alone—the former lover, the husband. The Gopher looked at Buck and his rage boiled up. Taking a step forward, he struck him heavily over the mouth with open hand.

"You done said I was a coward, didn't you?" he cried. "I'll show you right now."

The other did not struggle—merely eyed him steadily. A red trickle showed at the corner of his mouth. And both were breathing loudly. The lantern light threw their shadows grotesquely on the wall.

"So you done figured you'd steal her from me, did you?" the Gopher went on. "Why don't you answer? Did you? You won't talk? I'll soon learn you."

Again he struck Buck. His hand was raised for a third blow, but he mastered himself and let it fall.

"No," he said thickly. "If I start on you, it's like I'll kill you sooner'n I want. So you set there quiet and listen. I've got some things to say first."

He drew a box forward and sat down opposite his prisoner. Buck continued to watch him in a sort of cold disdain, which was peculiarly galling to the Gopher. Cocking one leg over the other, the Gopher went industriously to work sharpening a clasp knife on his heel. As he whetted, he began to recount to Cade the history of his imagined wrongs and his score against him.

Some of the things he named existed only in his twisted imagination; of a large part of the recital Buck was wholly ignorant. He told him, also, with a vicious smile, what he intended to do. Although his soul quaked, Cade was able to maintain his poise. A slight paleness and a tightening of all the muscles of his body—that was all. He did not deign to speak to the Gopher.

"And there ain't a jury in this county'll convict me," the Gopher ended. "They'll say I done just right. Speak up. You'll sit there sneering at me, will you? How do you like that?"

He leaned forward and smote Buck on the lips with loose knuckles.

"Is that all you've got to say?" Cade asked after the second blow. His voice was normal, which stung the Gopher.

He jumped to his feet and stooped over his prisoner; his open knife was in his hand. At once Cade threw himself backward on the stool, kicking straight up with all his strength as he toppled over. The toe of his heavy riding boot caught the Gopher under the chin, and that clever young man went down as though hit by a pile driver. Buck rolled over on his face and staggered upright. His torturer lay very still, but he would be sure. He sprang on to the body and stamped. Then he desisted and backed off.

With long heaves, praying as he worked, Cade rasped the ropes around his wrists up and down against the sharp point of the anvil. If only it would part before the man on the floor regained his senses. A strand caught on a nick in the metal. Buck crooked his knees and tore on it violently, and the rope gave.

Next moment he was bending over the relaxed figure of the Gopher.

"No," he muttered. "I can't do it. But if you weren't her husband, I'd kill you now."

Wild rage blurred his sight, for no man can come out of the valley of the shadow without hate of the man who thrust him there. He spurned the Gopher with his foot and let himself out of the smithy.

Her window was now in darkness. Did she know? Buck ran down past the corrals to a screen of chinaberries, where he had tied his horse. It was gone. Thereupon he struck across country, legging it by devious route back to the ranch, lest he be pursued.

The trap into which he had fallen did not shake his faith. She had written the call for help—of that he was positive—but what measures had been taken to coerce Marylee he did not care to dwell on. One of less courage would have felt some resentment. Let a woman embroil an average man in trouble, and his affection will suffer a rapid decline. It only served to deepen Cade's feeling.

He arrived home three hours after dawn. Perhaps those at headquarters were nonplused, but nobody ever questioned anything he did. And he shut himself up, holding aloof for several days.

Then word came from the outfit that the night herd had been stampeded. In the midst of a storm some one had waved a slicker. Nobody could say who the guilty party was; but all were sure that he was in Fork employ. And now the beef cattle were loose on the range, and the toil of weeks was undone. It would be impossible to regather more than a remnant of the herd.

"I tell you what, Buck," the cook broke out passionately, listening to the report, "there's only one thing to do. Let's all ride over there some night and have it out with them fellers. Smoke 'em out, the thieves. We'll hang that there Gopher from the highest limb we can find."

The boss did not embrace this suggestion, although the plan would have suited him admirably had he not been averse to sacrificing human life in a cause that had become personal to himself. Also, a raid on Fork headquarters would not be the end, he knew, no matter with what result attended.

As they were debating what had best be done, a telegram was brought to Cade by the stage driver from Blackwater. It was from his father, and bore date of Kansas City.

Send word to Price to meet me here. Will buy him out. This trouble must stop.

"Hum!" said the son. "I'd as lief fight it out."

But he obeyed the order. However, he found it beyond his capacity to indite a letter to the owner of the Fork. Starting with "Dear Sir," it seemed too polite—almost affectionate. Next he tried "Sir"; and the memory of his indignities in the blacksmith shop surged up, and he could not proceed. The pen was snapped in the fierce grip of his fingers. Finally he dispatched his father's telegram just as it had been received. His rider brought back answer that Price would start for Kansas City next morning.

"I reckon he's sick of it, too," said Cade, and called for the buckboard, that he might carry some bacon and flour to the outfit, working like beavers to make up the losses.

Halfway to their camp, and leagues and leagues from the Fork headquarters, he heard some one cry his name. Turning about, he perceived Marylee galloping after him. She waved to him to stop. Buck halted his team and waited. Salazar was not far behind, faithful as her shadow. The Mexican took his duties very seriously. From the day Price had brought him home—a motherless waif—and turned him over to his daughter for keeping, Raphael had made himself Marylee's slave.

On reaching the buckboard, she showed such agitation that she could not articulate. Months of worry and brooding had left their mark. Her eyes were wide and bright, and her face haggard. It was easy to see how the Gopher might well persuade a casual observer that his wife was deranged.

"Go back," she cried. "Go back and lock yourself up. If you don't—if you ever go out alone—oh, Buck, go back!"

The boss spoke to the fretting team and climbed out of the buckboard, holding to the reins.

"Raphael," he said, "get down and hold these."

The Mexican obeying, he reached up, and she slid from her horse into his arms.

"Now," said Buck, releasing her, "tell me all about it."

There was not much that he did not know; a little he had only half guessed. And perhaps there remained some that she did not tell, because of injured pride and womanliness.

"So he—choked you?" he asked, looking away to the horizon, instead of at her.

"Yes."

"And now," he continued, after a pause—"how is he going to get me?"

That was to be after the usual way of the Gopher. Buck would be riding range alone some fine day. There would come a puff of smoke from behind a rock pile—or it might be a tree—and another mystery that was no mystery would be added to the death toll of cowland. But of one thing Marylee was positive: nobody of the Price faction would shoot him but the Gopher.

"After he locked me up," she said brokenly, "they all drew lots to see who it'd be. And Ralph—oh, I can't tell you—yes, I will. He made me hold the hat. Think of it, Buck. I had to hold the hat while they drew to see which one would go after you. Of course he got it. I reckon he fixed that. They all said it was his right. And then—that letter."

"Hush!" said Buck. "Don't fret about that. I knew they'd made you."

"Yes," she cried hysterically, "they did; but I was fixing to tell Raphael. Nothing on earth would have made me write else. But Ralph, he lied to him and sent him off quick, and they kept me there—locked up, I was; and Raphael was shut into the tool house."

The Mexican boy was surveying the pair with noncommittal interest.

"He broke out," Marylee continued; "and then he hammered my door down. Yes, he did. And so we came looking for you."

"Well," said Cade, "there's only one thing to be done now. You can't go back to him. I'll take you to the ranch with me. Yes, I will—if the whole county comes battering at the door to get you back. Follow along."

She would not. Her father had gone to give orders for the work while he

should be absent to meet Cade; the Gopher was in Blackwater with a force of men. So Marylee calculated that it would be possible for them to regain the ranch before her flight was noted—the only one likely to learn of it was the cook, and he cordially hated the Gopher.

"I can't watch over you," she said, "but I can keep an eye on him. He's the one to watch, Buck. So I'll stay. But do take care."

Persuaded against his judgment and all his inclination, the boss yielded. He drove on to the camp, and Marylee galloped homeward, Salazar pounding along close in rear.

On a windy afternoon in the following week, Cade traversed a draw southwest of the Gourd, over beyond the San Pedro, on the borders of the Fork range. A breeze whipped through the mesquite, the sky was a deep blue, with tumbled white clouds motionless in it. In the draw the grass was close and green, and cows moved reluctantly aside as he passed, gentle from contentment.

To his right was a sharp rise in the ground—a miniature mesa—topped by a thick covert of thorny brush. The valley sloped gradually upward at his left to the base of the mountains. It was all so peaceful that even the unimaginative Buck was impressed by the calm. Coming in such sharp contrast to his thoughts, it roused him from somber reverie. He gazed about, and experienced a revulsion of feeling, a sense of peace. Soon his brighter thoughts and physical well-being found expression in a song. He yelled gleefully at a calf, humping himself in search of his mother.

"Hello, pretty thing! Man alive, but you'll make a fine steer some day! Go it, boy!"

The Gopher, lying behind a screening bush on the rise, planned to draw a perfect bead on Cade when he should come in line with a chalk rock on the mountainside. He would take his time, for there must be no miss. So the Gopher adjusted the sights for the fifth time, took note of the wind, and waited for

the slow-moving Buck. The Gourd boss was caroling as he rode.

Out of sight, at the base of the mesa, the Gopher's mount was tied by the reins to a tuft of grass. He thought he was held securely, which is the same to a trained cow pony as being staked. Suddenly the horse turned his head and looked long down the valley. A party of men was coming slowly in their direction. His master neither saw nor heard them.

Cade was now within a dozen rods of the rock. Snuggling his thirty-thirty against his shoulder, the Gopher squinted along the barrel. His finger twitched on the trigger.

A sharp report from the mesa made Buck whirl in the saddle. Instantly he threw himself off over the horse's shoulder, jerking his rifle free of the holster as he went. A man tottered up behind a bush on the crest clutching a gun. He swayed a few seconds and disappeared. Next, a woman came running around the base of the ridge and sped toward Cade.

"Don't shoot!" she cried. "Don't shoot! It's only me, Buck."

Marylee was sobbing against Cade's shirt bosom when the cavalcade approached. It was composed of Ford men, and Price was at their head. A hurried glance and Buck ran to his mount.

"Get back!" he called to Marylee. "Run! Get out of range!"

She did not budge. Instead, she cried to him to wait. Buck made no response, but went to meet his enemies. This was the end—well, he would show them of what the Cade breed was made.

The old cowman spurred ahead of his followers, standing up in the stirrups. His right hand was raised, palm outward, and he shouted: "Put her up, Buck. It's friends."

"Friends!" the boss echoed; and he laughed. "I'll wait for your kind of friends with this."

Nevertheless, he did not use his gun. And the owner of the Fork advanced without hesitation. Marylee saw the two men meet. There was some low-voiced talk, and Buck slowly put his

rifle back. Then the two shook up their horses and ascended the ridge.

Lying on top of some shale behind the brush was the Gopher. His hands were clenched on a branch of brier, and his chin was sunk against his chest. There was a hole in his temple.

"Well," said his father-in-law, "he's dead sure enough."

The most vivid romanticist could never have accused Price of showing undue grief. He stayed on his horse, letting the Gopher lie, and lighted a cigarette. Marylee and her attendant toiled up to them on foot, and Buck rose from beside the body and met them. There, in full view of her father, he put his arm protectingly around her shoulders. She began to cry.

"There, there. Don't look," he whispered.

Her father regarded them without malice, and flicked the ash thoughtfully from his stub.

The men of the Fork silently gathered around the group, gazing down at the Gopher. Nobody said anything for a long time. At last, clearing his throat nightly—

"I reckon a higher law has decided this case," said Price.

"And it's the finish of the Bill Green County war," his boss added.

The cowman nodded, and said: "Yes, this ends it. I'm off to meet the ol' man, Buck. And if he'll talk business, I'll close out. This trouble has cost me a pile of money. I reckon we'll all be glad it's over."

Which opinion received the wordless concurrence of his outfit. They glanced from Buck to Marylee.

"The question is," said Price again, "who done shot Ralph? Did you get him, Buck?"

Cade shook his head. Everybody turned toward the Gopher's widow. She said not a word, but, clear-eyed, waited for their judgment. One of the men grunted, and the Fork boss observed that he supposed it would be the decent thing to throw the Gopher over a horse and take him to headquarters for burial.

Meanwhile Raphael Salazar kept modestly in the background, stirring gravel with his boot very uncomfortably, and avoiding Price's eye.

A STRAIGHT TIP ABOUT THE WIND

PERCY HEATH, who is Henry W. Savage's crack press agent, does not like cold weather. Whenever a chilly blast strikes his Apollolike and upstanding form, he shudders with pain and hunts a radiator or an open fire. On one occasion he was waiting for a train at a railroad station in Cheyenne, and a windstorm gave him great discomfort.

"Say," ventured Heath, "does the wind blow this way all the time?"

"No, sir," replied the native to whom the question had been addressed, "sometimes it turns around and blows the other way."

BATTLE, MURDER, AND SUDDEN DEATH

COLONEL GEORGE M. BAILEY, the paragrapher and managing editor of the *Houston Post*, has been in a fight for a long time with the papers in Charleston, South Carolina, as to whether Houston is a better town than Charleston. A short time ago, as he was leaving his office one night, his city editor, whom he had only recently employed, handed him a telegram which stated that the city of Charleston was burning down.

"What observations," asked the city editor, "shall we make editorially in regard to this disaster?"

"Young man," replied Mr. Bailey, "you may say that, if this news is true, two-thirds of the rats and bedbugs in the United States will lose their lives before daylight."

The Man Who Was Not Hanged

By Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "The Pot of Gold," "The Old Man of Eagle Pass," Etc.

There is nothing commonplace or hackneyed about this story of a man condemned to life imprisonment, who found it hard to live the heavy drab life, behind the close, tall walls whereon men always walked with guns. If you want to know how one man's soul was regenerated read this. It is more in the nature of a human document than anything we have read for a long time. It is good fiction, but it is fact, too.

HANGING," said the warden who has officiated at many executions, "is a waste of good material. I have seldom seen the man whom time and proper prison conditions could not make over into a good citizen. Now, take the case of Logan."

This is the story of the man to whom he referred.

The trial was over. The jury was out, considering the evidence. The crowd remained to hear the verdict. The prisoner sat watching the door which had closed upon the twelve men when they retired.

His guilt had been established beyond what even the most skillful lawyer could term "reasonable doubt." He had committed murder during a robbery. One question remained—the penalty. Would they hang him or give him his life? The jury had the right to say which it should be.

Logan was a murderer and desperado. For more than fifteen years he had been robbing men on the highways. He had served three prison terms. He had terrorized several counties. This last crime had come as a climax to his ugly career. The victim had resisted. Rather than struggle with this citizen, Logan had shot him dead.

Fifteen years of robbing on the high-

ways; three prison terms; and then murder. The jury had retired with these facts.

Yet the jury had been out now more than two hours. Evidently there was division. It must have arisen over that question of penalty. Life or death?

The courtroom was very quiet. It was crowded with men. They were, for the most part, big men, with sunburned faces. Brutal curiosity had no part in holding them here. There was a sort of civic spirit present. They were honest citizens, and they wanted the protection of the law. Their bronzed faces were serious. They stayed, waiting for that jury's verdict, hoping to hear the words that would mean death.

Logan sat with his back to the crowd. He was watching that door. He was a tall man, well built, lean, dark-eyed. His face was hard; the scowl between his brows was like a scar. He did not change his expression; he did not move a muscle. He held his eyes on the jury-room door.

More than two hours out; it was evident that this jury was not unanimous. Yet the case was absolutely plain. Logan had lived by robbery; he was old in felony; and now he had killed. One could not tell, however. There was still a chance. There might be a recommen-

dation to mercy. The silence in the courtroom was heavy.

Into that thick stillness came three knocks. Logan straightened in his chair. The crowd stirred. A bailiff crossed the courtroom on tiptoe. The door opened a trifle, and a mutter of words came through. The bailiff tiptoed heavily to another door. A moment later the judge entered and took his seat.

The twelve filed in and found their chairs. The foreman handed a folded paper to the bailiff; the little slip which meant life or death. The bailiff passed it to the judge, who scanned it. His face showed nothing. He gave it to the clerk, who read aloud:

"We, the jury"—then followed words—*"do find the defendant guilty as charged"*—more words. The sunburned men were leaning forward in their seats. The prisoner sat rigid.

"And recommend him to the mercy of the court!"

A sound passed over the courtroom. At first it was like a heavy sigh. It grew, with individual mutterings, into a sullen buzzing of tongues. The judge made a sharp movement, and the bailiff called for order.

Logan was sitting in the same position. He had not moved a muscle of his face. But the red blood had surged into his cheeks in a wave, and his eyes were a little wider, as if he had met with a sudden surprise.

One man in the jury had scruples against hanging. Two men were in a hurry to get back to their ranches for the fall round-up. On these details the balance had turned.

A few days later the judge sentenced Logan to spend the rest of his life in prison.

A man is never satisfied. Logan, breathing God's air and walking on this earth, stowed as he talked to an old acquaintance, clad like himself, in stripes.

"Well," said this other felon, "you didn't climb the stairs."

"No," said Logan, with an oath, "but he handed me the whole book."

The other convict swore. It was like a man catching his breath, an oath of admiration for this man who dared to complain under such circumstances.

"What are you going to do?" he asked at length.

"I'll beat the place," said Logan quietly.

Some more prisoners came within earshot now, and the pair stopped talking.

Logan went about his work in the prison, and he talked with few of those about him. He performed his daily task, and every night he walked into his cell for lockup. His demeanor showed nothing that was in his thoughts.

He knew the heavy, drab life. He knew every nook and corner of this place. Every foot of those close, tall walls, whereon men always walked with guns, was familiar to him. By day, standing before his loom in the jute mill, he let his mind go from one section of the prison to another. By night, lying in his bunk, he held these different sections before his mental vision like a map.

There was this low place in the wall; there was that spot closer than the others to a building; and there was this hour when guards were slack.

The work in the jute mill was monotonous; his plans got the more chance for that reason. Insomnia kept him wide-eyed night after night; he used the darkness to study over details. He formed one scheme after another; he put each up for criticism, and in the end rejected it. Always, whether he was standing before his loom or walking in the crowded prison yard, he was waiting. He was ready, like a runner crouching at the tape, tense. He was looking for his chance. And always he kept his face expressionless, like a mask.

At length opportunity came to him. Three years after he had entered the prison, he rode out in a fuel cart which was driven by one of the trustees. A tarpaulin, which had been thrown over the load, hid him from the eyes of the guards.

It was raining hard, and it was grow-

ing colder that day. In the afternoon, while Logan lay in a gully among the bare hills, the rain turned to pelting sleet. His convict suit was sodden; he was chilled to the bone. Sickness seized him; fever alternated with chills. His limbs became like putty, and he could not stand. That night he crawled for miles. For weeks he lay in the rain and stole his food like an animal. At last he got through the cordon of hunters who were out for him. He procured citizens' clothing and made his way out of the State.

Some months went by. He had fallen into the habit of looking behind him, of waiting for a hand to fall upon his shoulder. He could not shake that habit off. One day the hand descended. They had traced him; and they took him back.

The punishment which they meted out to him did not effect Logan. He shut his teeth and bore it with philosophy. He left the dungeon with his face whiter and more drawn. But that was all the difference there was in him. He was not broken; nor was he any uglier. He belonged to a different breed than the vast majority of the convicts about him. The dungeon with him was an incident and not an episode.

He walked the yard again and he worked in the jute mill. His face was still inscrutable. But the repression was habitual now. It did not hide any thoughts of escape. He had given that up. He had learned that he was smaller than the law's machinery. It was no use to try to escape. These walls inclosed him, and they would continue to inclose him.

The time went by. The weeks became months; the months became years; and other years succeeded these years. And there was no difference between them.

Here and there a punctuation mark remained in his memory; the morning when there was a triple hanging and all the convicts yelled in chorus like animals; the afternoon when a quartet of desperate young fools tried to break and there was bloodshed in the yards; the

night when the guard stopped in front of his cell, and said: "Boys, Dewey licked the Spaniards in Manila Bay. The news just came." Such things projected into the drab twilight of time.

The time went by. Wardens came and went, to be replaced by others. One was weak, and there was much disorder in the prison; one was corrupt, and the place reeked with opium and drugs; one was just, but punished with great cruelty; and one was a nonentity, who left all things to the officials under him.

They were all the same to Logan. None of them meant anything to him. He obeyed the rules and walked by himself. Therefore he had no interest in their punishments. And they had nothing else to give him. Because of his escape, he was "in bad," and he got no favors. Once he did get a place in the hospital, and, again, he was made a cell tender. But neither position carried with it any responsibility, nor demanded any thought.

One year after another, and all of them the same. It was like a growing load which threatens to break the bearer's back. Logan felt as if he were going to become insane. There were times when he even planned suicide. But it was hard to procure the means to insure death. Once he was taken to the hospital very sick. Then he realized that, after all, he did not want death.

The prison had a library. There were several thousand books; and among them were many volumes of heavy reading: works of reference, of history, philosophy, and science.

A famous bank robber, who had learned the science of making the best of prisons, reminded Logan of this library one day; and told him to try it. Logan did so. Reading, he began to find some solace. While he held the book before him, his mind strayed from his environment. He was acquiring an education. The process was gradual. He was becoming something of a thinker. He fell into the habit of studying the men around him; and that, too, gave him some pleasure.

Time, slipping on and on, tempered the metal of his being. He had passed his maturity; and he was growing old. He was now white-haired. He still walked with his shoulders back; he retained his frown and the habit of looking other men in the eye. The frown was serious now instead of ugly; and his eye regarded other eyes with the earnestness of age rather than with defiance.

But his mind held out no hope for him. He was surrounded by walls. Life had no purpose. He was going to die here. His soul was getting ready to decay.

A new warden came to the prison. Standing in the line for the dining room during the noon hour, Logan saw him for the first time, and tried to read him from external appearance.

The manner of this warden struck the old convict. His predecessors had come inside the walls accompanied by a guard; or they had come with a rule that prisoners must halt at a distance; or they had not come at all. The new official was unattended. He was walking with his hands in his pockets. He was passing through a crowd of convicts, some of whom were actually brushing against him.

The warden's face showed two prominent characteristics: quick sympathy and decided firmness. Altogether he looked like the superintendent of some large industrial plant, come to walk among his workmen.

Logan saw these things, and then the line moved on into the dining room. Within a day or two he caught sight of the warden again inside the walls; and from now on this spectacle became common.

At the same time changes began to come in the prison. There were no more professional stool pigeons. The little coterie of convicts who had held easy jobs because of information which they were supposed to give vanished. Like the others around him, Logan felt as if a personal insult had been removed. Many small rules were abolished; there was less marching in line; more indis-

criminate movement and talking. Task work replaced regular hours in the jute mill, and a convict was allowed to leave the place when his task was completed without reporting to a guard.

The captain of the yard, himself an old-timer in the prison, and still dubious concerning the success of these new methods, had occasion to pass a narrow runway called "Death Alley" one afternoon. This alley extended between two high buildings. It was half dark; an unfrequented spot. As he was walking by, the captain heard what sounded like an altercation. He paused and listened, ready to spring into the shadows and stop the trouble. He recognized the voice; the words came to him; he smiled and stayed where he was. Inside Death Alley, removed from ordinary observation, Logan stood, a tall, striped figure in the shadows. His arm was extended before him; his hand gripped the shoulder of another convict; and at intervals it gave this other a vicious shake. Logan's tones were laden with anger; his words were profanely forcible.

The other felon had used the opportunity offered by the new rules in the jute mill to slip out with his day's task incomplete. When he had ended his lecture, Logan recapitulated.

"Don't ye know," said he, "ye hurt the whole bunch of us by doin' dirt to them that trusts ye? D'ye think we'll stand fer that? It's the likes of you keeps us from privileges."

The captain of the yard walked on without interrupting. The next day he said to the new warden:

"These hoodlums we get nowadays are a different breed than the old-timers. Now, there's Charley Logan——" And then he repeated what he had heard in Death Alley.

After that the warden watched Logan and looked up his record. He saw those same characteristics which had made Logan a successful prison breaker years before; which had made other wardens afraid to trust the man. He set about putting these things to some use.

One day Logan was made a trusty.

He was made attendant on the solitary cells where incorrigible prisoners are confined. In this body of nearly two thousand convicts there were always from four to eight men whose presence was a menace to others. For the most part these were young fellows, either yeggs or hoodlums. One, nicknamed the Hyena, had homicidal mania; another was a seemingly incurable jail breaker; the third had run amuck with an iron bar; and a fourth was a crafty and persistent plotter who had several times incited others to violence.

Logan's business frequently left him in the solitary corridor when no guard was near. The Hyena opened acquaintance by trying to induce Logan to smuggle in a knife. The jail breaker was longing for a half-dozen watchspring saws which friends on the outside had. These friends would see to it that Logan got paid.

His honor was something new to Logan. What integrity he had possessed in his youth had been forgotten during the long years. He appreciated the confidence which the warden had placed in him.

At times they allowed the incorrigibles out in the corridor to walk. During these intervals the different ones needed close watching. Logan, on whose shoulders much of this responsibility fell, found that this load was precious. He became greedy—like a starving man tasting food—and he wanted more.

Because he had a reputation among convicts, being a four-time loser, high-wayman, and murderer, Logan got attention when he chose to give advice. He found one or two young thugs in the solitary row whom he considered worth his while. He told them some of the facts which weary experience had brought to him. The idea of driving some sense into their thick heads appealed to him. He kept at it, and they listened to what he said.

Logan had been a trusty for several months when the warden gave him more work to do. He was made boss of the scavenger gang. This gave him thirty convicts to handle. They

cleaned up all refuse about the prison; and they were also the fire department. As foreman, Logan had to see that they did their work properly; and he also had to act as a sort of night watchman, looking over the buildings every evening to prevent fires.

The members of the scavenger gang were, for the most part, young convicts. Many of them were inclined to be careless or to shirk. Now and then there was one who was stubborn about loafing. The prison was large; there were many nooks and corners to look into, in order to make sure that the work had been properly performed. Logan found his hands full. There was always some member of his gang who needed raking over the coals. He did this with the thoroughness of a man who knows how to use hard language effectively; he did it with the conscientiousness of an old man who is interested in results. There was in him something of the martinet.

During the day he had many little problems on his mind. At night, when he had made the last rounds of the prison with his lantern, looking out for fires, he went to his cell, tired out, ready for sleep. Always in the morning he got up with something new to do.

His gang was constantly changing owing to convicts being discharged or shifted. Gradually he found that a tough element was creeping in. The warden kept sending him more hoodlums.

The hoodlum is the hardest of convicts to reform. He is a modern product. He is a result of crowded streets and bad environment. He is always ready to make trouble in some way; be it stealing a cake of soap or assaulting a fellow convict in chapel during prayers. He smuggles in drugs or firearms. He is the breed that tries to break by killing guards. He is what theorists call "a recidivist," and what old officers call "a bad one."

The increase of hoodlums in his scavenger gang kept Logan awake and thinking. One time it was a pair of young gas-pipe thugs plotting an escape right under his nose. Again it was a petty larcenist stealing tobacco from an-

other convict's pocket. Dealing with such cases, Logan acted vigorously. His language was direct, and it was sufficiently profane to appeal to the worst of them. His record as a criminal got attention for Logan; and his bearing was the sort that demands respect.

As the knowledge of his power over this younger element grew on Logan, he took more pleasure in its use. One day a prison official heard the old man talking to a yegg who was about to depart with his time served.

"So," Logan was saying, "ye're going out, and ye want to know more about box work? Well, I'll tell ye the best way to beat a safe. It's the way that Jimmy Hope told me. It's easy, too. Where did ye come from?"

The younger convict named the town.

"All right," said Logan crisply. "Go back there by the first train. Ye say ye have some friends. Get them to nail a job for ye. And go to work the minute ye hit the burg. See? Now, when ye get yer first week's wages, ye want to hold out as much as ye can and plant it. Go to the biggest bank in the place and salt it away there. When the next week's wages comes along, do the same thing with that. By and by, if ye tend to business, they will give ye a better job. Take it. Ye will get more wages then. Make that plant bigger. Keep on going to that same bank every week. After a while ye will get a better job yet. Take that and do the best ye can at it. Now ye will be getting quite a lump in that plant of yours. Hang onto it. See? Don't touch whisky, and steer clear of women. That's all there is to ut. It's the only way to beat a safe. Jimmy Hope, he told me that himself, and he ought to know. And listen, young man"—Logan pointed his finger like a pistol at the other—"if ye don't try it that way, ye'll land back here inside of a year. I know. I've tried it myself. Ye mind what I tell ye."

This sense of responsibility for the acts of others was growing with Logan. He got into the habit of talking with guards and prison officials over details of the work. He also talked with them over his men. He talked on terms of

equality; and because his suggestions were good ones these men listened to him. Sometimes he came with complaints about the convicts under him; sometimes he gave out bits of information concerning prisoners whom he had observed; sometimes he had praise. And, whether or not other convicts were within hearing, he always said these things in the open. His standpoint was that of a man deeply interested in the prison discipline and the welfare of the mass of its inmates.

This demeanor of Logan's was a matter of general knowledge among the convict body. And he was respected, because men knew he was sincere.

One of the toughest prisoners in the place—he was known as a "knife man"—came to Logan. Said this one:

"I'm in bad, or I'd put the warden wise myself. See? I come to put ye hep, and ye can pass the word. Shang Red and Japanese Billy, and that new con they call Chi Fat, is framing fer a break. There's a plant to be made fer them outside; and Red will pack it in when he comes off the hill."

"I'll 'tend to it," said Logan; and he went to the officials with the information.

Logan had been a trusty nearly two years now. They added one more duty to his list. They made him prison undertaker.

In this convict body, numbering some nineteen hundred, the death roll was twenty a year on the average. It became Logan's business to perform the last offices over these unfortunates. After he had prepared each body for the grave, he took it forth and gave it sepulture.

The little graveyard was on a grass-covered hillside more than a half mile distant from the prison walls.

The first time he went forth to dig a grave was the first time that Logan had passed outside these walls since his escape. An interval of many years had passed.

He walked out now unattended by any guard. In his suit of stripes, with his spade over his shoulder, he walked

down the winding road. The gates were shut behind him. He was in the open.

He passed two watchtowers, with their rapid-fire guns. He went on around a little hill; out of range and out of sight. The last guard waved his hand in friendly greeting. He left that rifle-bearing sentinel behind.

Before him stretched the open country. It was unwallled and unpatrolled. Grass billowed in the wind. A grove of oak trees offered seclusion and shade. A pleasant world; a world of sun and shadow and clean winds. He had not tasted its air for many weary years.

He smelled the fresh earth; he felt the cool breeze on his cheek.

He walked slowly to the little graveyard. He took his spade and dug. He did not work with any haste. It was good out here.

When the task was done, he paused for a few moments and looked around. Then he cleaned the spade and shouldered it. He walked back along the winding road, and he went in through the close, high walls.

Three years had passed, and Logan had labored to reform some of the toughest young convicts in the prison. He was living an active, useful life.

For a long time the warden had watched his development.

Logan was bossing his gang when the warden called him to one side.

"Charley," said he, "you're coming up the first of the month."

"Me, warden!" Logan's face did not change; but his breath came in quick. The warden nodded.

"Parole?" Logan swayed a little where he stood. The red surged into his cheeks as it had done that afternoon when the jury brought in its verdict.

"Yes," said the warden. "And I think you'll make it."

The years had been so long, and he had grown so old, that he had forgotten freedom save as something which made his heart ache when he thought of it. He could not really believe this thing.

The first of the month came. The board met; and Logan "made it." He went out into the world a free man so long as he behaved himself. He got a job. He worked for small wages. He followed the advice that he had given the young yegg. To-day he is watchman in a bank.

This is the case of Logan. Time and intelligent handling took a murderer and made of him a useful citizen.



MEDICINE WHICH WOULD NOT WORK

HE was an Irishman, tall, broad-shouldered, and red-headed. They had brought him into the hospital on a shutter, and, so far as the doctor could see, he was troubled principally by the fact that he had been overeating. Finally the doctor turned to the nurse and ordered for the patient an emetic.

"Look here, doctor," said the Irishman, "there's no use in you giving me an emetic. I tried it twice in the old country, and it wouldn't stay on my stomach five minutes."



GROPING FOR A GENIUS

ANYBODY, from the millionaire down to the cook, can write a good play. This is a fact. It must be true because all of them, laying aside for the moment their overmastering modesty, tell you so.

This is what the manager of a great theatrical business in New York said the other day:

"It is the hardest thing imaginable to find a good play. Our concern has read a thousand plays a year for the last seven years, a total of seven thousand, and out of that number we have not found a single play worth using. Anybody can write a play, but mighty few can write it right."

The Far Cry

By Henry Milner Rideout

Author of "Beached Keels," "Dragon's Blood," Etc.

CHAPTER XV.

IN CHARGE.

HERCULES crossed the great sea in an earthen pot, and left an allegory for human flesh and human spirit. Mr. Fraye might urge the spirit forward, but his vessel was too old, the clay had worn too fragile; and that evening, at dinner in the grove, he was forced to call for his bearers, and be carried in his long chair to the house. Wallace, Tisdale, and Godbolt had a private audience in his bedroom, while he lay waiting to be undressed by meek brown Anak, the lubberly nurse.

"My dear, good boys," he panted, looking up with grateful eyes. "If I should go suddenly—I don't intend to, but if I should—you watch over Katherine. You understand. Let Mace take the island if he can, and the devil take Mace if he will. But keep her harmless. A-a-ah, ha!" he sighed, and caught back his breath like a staggered fighter. "Keep Katherine safe. Take her home, should anything go wrong with Walter. I see you will. Here's your commission. Read it, please."

He handed them a long envelope. Wallace read out the inclosure:

"During my present illness, I appoint Messrs. Robert Wallace, A. R. Tisdale, and Francis Godbolt as my agents to safeguard my interests and those of my granddaughter, Katherine Fraye, here on Fraye's Atoll, sometimes known as Pulo Princess. The aforesaid gentlemen will employ all justifiable means to preserve the peace and good order now existing in this island. The village has received word, through the headman and the schoolmaster, that until further notice, or until the arrival of Walter Fraye, all orders given by my agents herein ap-

pointed shall be considered issuing from me.
THOMAS MASTERMAN FRAYE."

The old man watched them keenly.

"Do you agree to that?"

The three men bowed, and one by one took his hand silently.

"You know my feeling," said he, "better than I can express it. Firearms on my dresser. Serve out, Anak."

The barefoot giant, looking frightened, gave them each a black pistol, well oiled, and a packet of ammunition. They slipped these into their pockets.

"I trust you'll find no need for—anything of that kind," said Mr. Fraye. "Good night, then."

Authority had fallen upon them, the command of his island. They went out from the bedchamber, deeply affected. As they passed through the big living room, Katherine stood by the front door.

"All's well?" she faltered, smiling pitifully. "You left him well?"

Remorse took hold of them, to see her—young, lonely, bright as only wholesome youth appears to wholesome youth, so near with her starry brown eyes, and yet so unutterably removed from them. They had laughed with her on equal terms, just now at the dinner table; her grandfather had almost taken them into the family with her; and for that very reason here she stood all the farther away, intrusted to them on the pinnacle of their honor. She was a girl with red lips and throat of gypsy tan; she was their ward, Katherine.

"All's well," they stammered. "He's only tired." And they edged out of doors in a hurry, before they could say

too much. "Good night, Miss Fraye. All's well."

Once in their bachelor quarters, they showed the hollowness of that agreeable fiction by holding a conference round Godbolt's table. Their candles burned low, and still the talk flowed on in an undertone. They sat as a committee of safety—three conspirators, with sunburned faces hard and cautious, ready to turn and listen at any sound.

"Here!" said Wallace, when the last candle began to sputter in the socket. "Here are the things we have to do, in order. Look sharp, you fellows." And he read the penciled minutes of their meeting:

"First: Every night, beginning now, shall be divided into three watches; the watchman to patrol the grove, garden, shore, and main house.

"Second: Every day, a lookout shall be stationed by the jetty, with binoculars, to sweep the beach and especially the near point of Mace's Island; to give warning immediately, if he sees either a boat putting off, or any person wading the channel toward us.

"Third: Picked natives shall camp near the sheepwalk, to prevent any approach by land.

"Fourth: Armed escort for Miss Fraye, everywhere outside her house."

The conspirators eyed one another across the dying light.

"Hold hard!" put in Tisdale. "Point four is delicate. Who's to be escort?"

Blank looks followed. No one had foreseen the question. They had cut straws for the night watch; but here was a duty which demanded something more than rotation in office. There were no volunteers. Tisdale answered himself:

"You, Sainty."

The sailor recoiled in his chair.

"Me?" he cried, like one accused of monstrous iniquity. "Me, the hulking-est—to look after her? Bells o' Beulah, you're lunatic!"

But Wallace basely gave his vote, nodding at Arthur. They were two to one. The candle snuff leaned over, and burned blue in a welter of wax.

"Ye skulkers!" Godbolt stood up, incensed. "Putting it on me! Shirkers!"

Tisdale caught him by the hand, pleading.

"Sainty! You're the oldest. We can't, and somebody must. What else did her grandfather say to-night? 'Let the rest go. Look after Katherine.' I'm not fit to, Rob's not. You must, old boy. You're the only real shot with a gun. She might depend on that, if the pinch came. You must!"

The long black candle wick curled into its brazen cell, and expired. Darkness filled the room—a darkness that gradually became gray starlight. The doorway glimmered at the top with heavenly stars; at the bottom with glowworm stars reflected from the lagoon; and in this frame, half blurred against the shadow of plantains, Godbolt's tall body loomed like a cross, with both arms outspread as he gripped the jambs. He leaned there for some time, without replying.

"If I must," he muttered, rather to the night than to the room, "I must."

His broad shadow dropped its arms, and faded from the door.

"My watch now. Go to bed."

He had shouldered the island, and taken their first patrol. Ocean made the sole disturbance, beyond its barrier.

Dawn came in a pink mist, morning blazed red through areca and plantain, a multitude of birds "warmed their little loves" with twittering complaint among bush and treetop. Nothing had happened. Oliver Mace and his forty-odd men might have levanted in the night, so far as any life appeared from the dark-green bulk of Mango Island, floating on the southwestern glaze of the lagoon.

Soon after breakfast, Godbolt reported for duty—the duty which his fellows had put upon him overnight. His mode of reporting was like the man, blunt and apparently simple.

They were all assembled at the rear of the house, Mr. Fraye lying in his long chair, the young commissioners leaning on the rail near by, and smoking. Sunlight poured through the trees, and gilded the brown floor of the grove, as if an eastern gate swung wide to let

the earliest morning flood a cloister. Not far off, though partly hidden by shrubbery, Katherine stood beside the pole of her dovecot. Her head caught the light, and from time to time her hand rose in a graceful motion, like the hand of a sower flinging seeds broadcast. Pigeons fluttered above her, dropped behind the shrubs again—now a white pigeon, now a russet-mottled, or a pair of blue "leadies." The girl was talking to them all, as they rose, and circled, and fell, with their peaceful whinny of wings.

"You think, sir," said Godbolt, "that these boys are right about—her?"

Old Mr. Fraye searched him with a kindly smile.

"Quite, captain. We confide her to you for the present."

Without more ado, the sailor got up from the railing, went down into the grove, and marched straight over to the dovecot shrubbery.

"Miss Fraye," he broke out, "would you take me for a guardian angel?"

The pigeons whirled aloft, in a medley of lustrous feathers, eddying upward, so that Katherine's brown eyes and fair hair gleamed, for a moment, through a storm cloud of wings. When the sunshine cleared, she stood holding a single member of her flock—a white pigeon, that balanced on her forearm, and leaned his bosom against her blue dress.

"How did you happen to say that?" she rejoined. Either Godbolt's sudden appearance or the flurry of pigeons had given her a start. "Why do you ask?"

He wasted no preamble.

"Your grandfather'd feel easier if you had company," he said, with a vague gesture, "whenever you go—roundabout like, next few days. 'Twould freshen the nip on his mind, sort of. I don't want to hamper you none. But——" The sailor's black eyes cast a flickering glance toward the veranda; his cheerful, outdoor voice descended to its lower notes. "But you running free, like, and me within good hail, somewheres—no need to carry yesterday's gun, say, from now forward."

Katherine stroked her pigeon. Whether she was annoyed, or merely trying not to laugh, Godbolt could not be certain. Then she looked up; their eyes met; and he knew that she had taken the spirit, not the form, of his poor words.

"You're very kind, captain. Perhaps you'll see me to the village, by and by." She paused, and, smiling, held out her arm with the bird upon it. "Don't you recognize your old friend?"

The pigeon spread his white wings and tail, shifted his rosy claws, and caught a new balance on his perch. He was the carrier, the spent messenger from abroad.

"The little tike!" cried Godbolt joyfully.

As though averse to nicknames, the bird sprang from her arm, and flickered up to join his companions on the sunny ledges of the cot.

"He brought you here," said Katherine.

They both stood looking overhead, watching him strut and wheel among the others.

"God bless him for that!" boomed the sailor.

Katherine turned away rather quickly.

"Shall we get ready for the village?" she asked. "It's time we oversaw the husking."

So began a week of peaceful and busy days. To see this pair together—Godbolt, heavy of frame but light on foot, rolling along beside the girl—no one would have taken them for ward and guardian, or guessed that on her account he carried a weapon under his tunic, in the armpit. They went away laughing and talking; they returned so.

The village—a toy street of tawny, basket-woven huts, shining cleanly under slant palms and bowers afire with hibiscus—the village knew a large, merry gentleman who watched the naked children play, and learned their names so quickly, while the princess of the island was indoors with some sick woman, telling the neighbors what the best food might be.

The go-down saw them inseparable;

for white-clouted workmen, trotting under pole and panniers into that cool, shady warehouse, got their tally splints from the merry gentleman, and timorously watched the princess enter in her book the tale of coconuts poured clumping on the mats.

Rumors coursed everywhere, from the village to the farthest western horn of the atoll, and the swineherds' camp by the channel—rumors of war, of a new master coming from Mango Island with ne'er-do-wells, and a change for the worse; rumors that were checked by the sight of Katherine passing with her guard.

And so the week went by; no word from Mace, no stir from Mango Island but a wreath of smoke before meal-time.

One late afternoon, the go-down doors being shut for the night, Katherine and Godbolt took their walk eastward, some three miles, to the ocean side. A loud surf crashed, as they went threading the hollows and low mounds of an upward-sloping wood; and their first view, when the trees parted on gray coral boulders, was a view of smothering crests, the whole sea outflanking them in a concave series, white wall after white wall that toppled roaring on the reef, to explode and shoot high against the sunlight. Each wave burst afar, but sent hissing layers onward, so that the island's outer curve, a thirty-foot rampart of coral boulders, storm-built and water-carven—hung beetling over sea foam laced with Tyrian blue. 'Here was land's end, all broken into blocks and lumps and ruined seats, as of an amphitheater bent wrong side out.

Godbolt found his own hyperbole for the scene.

"The stern of the earth," said he, "kicking up her wake behind her!"

They had chosen two blocks of coral, not far apart, where they could sit facing each other. Katherine turned her back to the sea, and, with an easel before her, was busily dabbing brush into paint, and paint on canvas. Godbolt, with knife, twine, and glue bottle, sat woodling a new shaft for the golf club

he had broken. Each worked as if there were no time to lose; yet their work seemed only an excuse for talking.

"The stern o' the earth, sailing away with us!"

Katherine, behind her canvas, kept up a running fire of glances, preoccupied and furtive glances, now at him, now at the palms behind him, and the long shadow of their frontier.

"Mmmh!" she mumbled, a brush between her lips; then, removing it: "Yes. A lonely place. Very lonely, and final, and—solemn."

They worked on together in friendly silence.

"Can't I see what you're painting of it?" the sailor begged. He made as if to rise.

"Don't you dare!" She frowned him down again. "How can I do a port—a landscape, with you jumping back and forth across it?"

He sat quite still, and patiently carried his woodling round and round the shaft.

Regularly, when the sea dealt a louder, heavier shock, they could feel the island quake under them with a deep thrill; fathomless foundations were set vibrating for only a moment, but a moment which undid the security of ages, and made earth itself appear hardly more stable than a passing thought.

"Time," said Godbolt, in soliloquy—"time's a funny thing."

"And what puts that into your head?" inquired Katherine, behind her canvas.

He stretched out his hand for an instant, as if his idea were palpable and all-surrounding.

"Why, there her underpinning goes it again," said he. "The whole place beats like your pulse, or a timepiece ticking. Not Greenwich time, either, it ain't—a little piece of eternity, might say." He dropped his hand, for the tremor had passed. "And to think of all them little beggars down below, the coral fellows, thingumbobs, polyps, that lived and died so ancient, leaving their bones to build and build. Talk about your tabernacles o' the Lord! Gorry!

And I've known you just about a week."

The girl laughed. It pleased her to see his mind cut a wide circle, then drop.

"Has the week been long?"

But Godbolt was not laughing.

"Yes, if length meant bigness," he replied. "The best portion out o' my life, 'tis, anyhow."

Another mood, another man, would have made this utterance a mere dismal piece of folly. Even now, Katherine's color mounted; but she saw Godbolt's face as she loved to see it, warm and sorrowful and honest, like his words. She remembered also what her grandfather had said about voices; for this man's voice rang true, giving out rudely the meditations of a clean heart.

"I call it a good week," she assented; and because a kind of safety lay in plaguing him—"Why, captain," she went on severely, "has your life been such a blank as that? A 'disgusting, dreary desert'?"

Godbolt regarded her steadily.

"'Tain't," said he, "the wittiest joke in nature, to be a—to be a superfluous man."

Katherine made a funny little face, of surprise and mock reverence.

"Are you the superfluous man? Really? You don't in the least resemble any character of Gorki's!"

The sailor was not to be flouted into a better conceit of his position, or baffled by little authors.

"Gawky? Some gawks can be o' service," he retorted. "Not me. Drifting, always. That's my *hookum*—drifting by chance. No sense in it." He fell to work on the broken brassy, now almost as good as new under his neat repairs. "And come old age," he chuckled, "some job like this—to sit on an oakum bale and whittle boats for children, like one o' them pious, hoary-whiskered seafaring frauds in a Sabba'-school book!"

They laughed. Katherine swung into hiding behind her easel, where some problem of art absorbed her—all but one round young elbow, that wagged

continually with the strokes of her brush.

"Is that why you refuse wine?"

The sailor gave a jump. To paint pictures was wonderful enough, but here sat a girl who could do that busily, and meanwhile send her thoughts winding in through the tangled motives of a man.

"Drink never helped me none," he admitted. "I wouldn't dare try it. Not while you're alone, and a wasted piece in the world."

She faced him again, reproach in her brown eyes.

"There's my first disappointment. That's not like you. It sounds weak."

He raised his head proudly.

"Weak?" he cried. "O' course! Any man's weak. Some of us don't ask for Dutch courage, that's all!"

He thought she smiled, but the canvas intervened before he could be certain. She was painting faster than ever. The shadow of the island trees which covered them now streamed across coral flats, and darkened the outer pools. Ashore, evening had arrived; the afternoon glowed only at sea, on the white-fuming waves and the blue plateau of the horizon.

Katherine shut her paint box, and stood up.

"The grandpater will be fretting. We should never have stayed so late."

A coconut, still in the husk, happened to be lying where it had rolled, among the breakage of the higher beach.

"There!" She turned the thing over with her foot—a white mouse of a foot, as Godbolt saw. "Is it chance, captain, or design, that coconuts are shaped so?"

He had never before considered the form of a coconut in the husk. This windfall had three brown surfaces, joining in a raveled point at either end.

"It's like a fat sort o' boat," said he.

"A boat," replied Katherine, looking down. "A boat that falls into the sea by chance, and floats away, and perhaps comes to nothing, or perhaps comes drifting on a reef, to help make an island like this, where people live for years. So logs have come drifting

—by chance—to crumble into earth for it. Sometimes a log brings a passenger, an animal, one or two little creatures that have sailed hungry from who knows where? Corals have grown, and breathed in the spray, and died, as you said, captain, to leave their bones building underneath and building. Wasted pieces? I've wondered, too, when I was walking the shore alone; before you came—by chance?"

The argument was light as an arrow, but flew straight. Godbolt acknowledged a hit, not ungracefully, by clapping his big hand on his chest.

"You're right! 'Twas your pigeon led us here. Some sense in our coming!"

Katherine looked up at him, then swiftly down as before.

"Shall I tell you what it meant to me—your coming?" Her voice was low and hurried, but had a quality like the rise of song. "It was an answer, when you came. We were alone. This man—this Mace. We needed help. There was no ship to hope for, any more than now, so that I gave up watching the sea. Do you know Elsa, how she prayed for a knight? Well, I—never mind, it all came true. At our worst need, there you sailed in out of the sunset. That was the wonder. Three men, three good champions ready to stand by us! You broke through the sky, as our brown people say. After so much longing, to see my three men at the door, and you their captain——"

She stopped short, alarmed by her own confession. When she dared raise her eyes, they found in Godbolt's a reflection of their panic. He was very pale, and his lips quivered. There came a long pause, through which the fundamental quaking of the island passed like a bit of their own emotion.

"Home now," said Katherine. "Let's go home."

As they turned from the noise and brightness of the sea, and were about to enter the wood, she pointed suddenly with her left hand.

"That came here by design. The

home rock. We brought it out from England."

A granite boulder loomed where the dusk began, under the palms—a rude monument, fronting the open sea with one gray face on which glimmered several tablets of bronze. The home rock, in a land that held no other, it stood among familiar flowers, a mass of blue and white periwinkle covering the place of forgotten ashes.

"If you are a wasted piece, what are they? My father's name was Francis, like yours."

Godbolt could not answer her, for the waves rolled an everlasting requiem.

The sound of this grew faint and high, as the pair hurried home through twilight woods, down the imperceptible hill that sloped from the sea rampart to the lagoon. Not till they saw their veranda lights twinkling did the girl speak again.

"I want you to promise me, Captain Francis."

"Anything!" said he.

The veranda was empty. She paused, halfway up the step.

"Let me feel proud of you," she begged. "Don't think yourself—adrift, any more!"

He looked up slowly, clasping her mended brassy and her painter's kit, as if loath to go empty-handed.

"A new way o' thinking, that is!" he rejoined hoarsely. "It goes to a man's head."

"But promise. You're not adrift now, or alone?"

He laughed.

"When I'm certain sure—when this old busted coconut o' mine comes floating to land solid, and no mistake—why, bless your heart, I'd—I'd fill a glass o' wine to your good fortune!"

They shook hands on the compact. Katherine ran upstairs with her canvas. He never saw the painted side of that, for she had held it jealously away from him.

It was observed, a few moments later, that Godbolt came singing into the bachelors' house; that his features

caught something beyond their share of light; that all his motions were those of a man buoyed up by more than mortal confidence.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIRST BLOOD.

Mace was not dead, but waiting. Thrice a day his pillar of smoke twined over Mango Island, and faded on the sky, like the breath of a puny volcano, half asleep. Bright weather covered the atoll, from sunrise to sunset; night unto night showed knowledge abiding in clear stars; and all things but the sea remained quiet. It was only a truce.

One afternoon, about four o'clock, a scared villager ran panting into the bachelors' house. Godbolt and Wallace happened at that moment to be there.

"People coming!" cried the runner. "*Orang datang!* The people come!"

He was one of those picked men—picked from a poor lot—who had lain camping near the sheepwalk; a handsome creature, whose godlike bronze body incased a chicken heart. Distracted between propriety and fear, he clawed up the white clout slipping round his loins, and babbled. People had stolen in, he tried to say, through the western woods beyond the field.

"Well," Godbolt drawled, "we better go look."

So many vain alarms had come in the same fashion from the same quarter, that now the two white men donned their helmets lazily, and made no great haste about going. They sauntered westward, through a curving avenue of coconut and betel spars. Their cowardly vedette followed them skulking a little way, then "took his hook," as Godbolt said, and was seen no more.

They came to his late outpost at the verge of the woods, but found all tranquil. Their picked men were gone. The green pasture glowed; sheep lay in the hollows of it, and strayed nibbling over gentle knolls.

Both men made a careful scrutiny, far and near. All round the field, the

serried border of palms quivered and gleamed in a light wind. Sunshine poured free as over a parade ground. There was no sign, even, of Katherine's red flags. Only the sheep occupied this clearing, their dusty coats brightened like so many bits of golden fleece.

"Anybody there?" Wallace nodded at the western shadows, long and dense beneath a lowered sun.

Godbolt shook his head.

"Psalm Twenty-two," he replied. "I can't sight no trouble, these parts. Can you?"

Wallace looked everywhere, with his faithful and heavy scowl.

"No. They've cried wolf on us again. I don't believe Mace would dare. We're too much for him, the three of us."

"Don't you go be sure o' that," chuckled the sailor. "Mace ain't the boy to lack courage. If things was ripe, he'd come along."

After a while he added seriously:

"Blest if I know Mace's game! Now's his time for jumping us off the board, now or never. Pretty soon her brother'll come sailing back—this boy Walter, nice little easy boy himself, *but* with a vessel *and* a crew likely. Mace better start now, or he'll overstay his tide. Shakespeare allowed there was one, in the affairs o' men."

Godbolt laughed. He was in high feather nowadays, and on this day above all.

"Whole thing seems to make you happy," grumbled Wallace, and stirred, with the toe of his pump, a little dust out of the grass.

"Happy? Almost!"

A moment later, Wallace raised his head.

"I was afraid so. What's to be the outcome, Sainty? What about her?"

At that question, Godbolt turned as if stung. He spoke, but with a sort of violent deliberation.

"I like you, Rob," he said hoarsely. "I like ye fine, Rob. You got a grand, square way o' looking at a man, square, and forehead foremost, and broad betwixt the eyes, like a good old black bull. I like that way; keep it so; while

ye talk." The sailor went pale, went red again, then laughed unsteadily. "Whip her out, what you're thinking," he cried. "You're into the china shop, Robin, old bull! Plump into the china shop. Smash away."

Wallace continued looking at him, front foremost, as he desired.

"I'm thinking this," replied Wallace. "I like her. You like her. That's all right for now."

Godbolt clapped him on the shoulder, and held him at arm's length, crying, in a heat of honest affection:

"Like her? Katherine? O' course we like her! What ails ye for that, Rob, my child? Both of us, how could we choose but like her?"

Wallace drew free from Godbolt's hand, and gathered himself toward speaking. It was his turn, now, to be white in the face.

"I'm a stupid kind of chap," he began obstinately. "I'm not clever, like Arthur Tisdale. You know me, Sainty. I'm dull as wood. But don't go thinking I'm jealous. No woman ever looks my way twice; or, if they do, I can't find a word to say. No, sir, it's not jealousy. I like her, but I like you—better. You're my notion of a man. Sainty——" And here, for once in a rather stolid lifetime, Wallace beat his breast. "Why, Sainty, I'd go through fire for you! And so would any woman. There! The cat's out of the bag!"

He let go a great breath, and stood waiting.

Godbolt stepped in closer.

"What d'ye mean, Rob?" he demanded sternly.

Wallace held his ground without flinching.

"I mean just this," he retorted. "And you know it—deep down, you know it. I've thought it over nights abed. I've seen it in your face, the way you talk, the way you move lately. Katherine's coming to think of you, as I say any woman—— Oh, look ahead, Sainty! We're here on our behavior. It's all temporary. Nothing ahead. All bound to come to nothing."

Godbolt knotted up his brows and his fists.

"Do you see past what you're a-hinting, Rob?" His black eyes burned. "For less'n that, I'd—not on my account, on hers——"

Wallace turned away, and stared at the seaward palms.

"It takes a fool," he observed bitterly, "to speak out as I do."

A dry clashing of palm blades ran round that sunny hollow square in which he stood; and, like another voice or mood of the same breeze, he heard old ocean mourning.

"Rob, it's me played the fool."

Wallace kept his back turned; however dull, he knew better than to watch a friend stammering and choking with useless anger.

"A good mate you are, Rob. I couldn't fight ye, no, not for her sake, even; because you're wrong there, about her. Wrong by a million mile, thank the Lord!"

These last words rang so different, so grateful, that Wallace could face round again. For both men, it was a haggard moment.

"About me, you spoke right," said Godbolt firmly. "All this must come to naught. Nothing ahead. What way is there out—for me?"

His answer came flying with a little spiteful noise through the air. Not caring what they did, the friends had wandered forth into the pasture, and remained—as chance would place them—two white and shining marks upon a well-cropped knoll. The spiteful noise flew, enveloped them, and died—like the hum of a taut wire struck by an urchin's pebble.

"Shot!" groaned Wallace, and staggered, and fell groveling on the dusty grass. "I'm hit, Sainty, through the arm!"

He heard his own words, marveled at his own cleverness, for all he had felt was one sledge-hammer shock near the elbow, that spun him half round after it, and so felled him. He tried to be game, to rise. A heavy hand knocked him sprawling and dizzy as before.

"Flat! Lay flat!" roared Godbolt, pinning him to earth, and setting the example. "Don't ye stand up and give

a target! Reckless waistlers we was! Lay flat! Aha, I spy! The beggar's hid among them trees!"

A blaze of shots followed. The sailor, crossing his wrists on the ground, twice emptied his revolver loudly, carefully, and smokily into the western woods and the sunset. Three or four jets of yellow dust answered him, at first, by spattering up from the knoll; but these quickly ceased, even while sheep after sheep bundled away helter-skelter for the nearest woods.

"Missed him! The beggar's running," grunted Godbolt. "He had smokeless powder, and a silencer on his muzzle, drat him! Hid where we scared that ram, other day. But we gave him enough. He's run clean for Mango Island."

Wallace did his best to feel awake, though the sky and the treetops reeled.

"Mace, was it?"

Godbolt stowed his weapon under his armpit, and jeered—obviously jeered, for the moral effect.

"Mace? No. Some hired man. Ye ain't no more than winged, are ye? Why, there! Mace could 'a' shot, they tell me. That was only the hired man."

Then, with a strange, uncouth tenderness—

"Rob," he inquired, "ye ain't hurt bad, are ye?"

Wallace grinned foolishly, sat up, displayed a crease in the elbow of his right sleeve.

"Not badly. My arm's broken. First blood for Mace."

His friend reached over, and fingered his wound considerably.

"Broke, yes. Bullet clear through. Hum. I can set that, Rob. Gunshot holes are no treat to me; I've seen plenty worse. Come on home till we can jury rig ye."

They crawled backward out of the sunshine; lay watching among the palm trunks; and then, with many a backward glance, began to retreat. Peace reclaimed the pasture. From woods to left and right the silly sheep were venturing out, bleating, joining once more their scattered groups. The affair was

over; an ambush at long range, not an advance.

The two skirmishers came home silently, Wallace nursing his arm, Godbolt wrapped in thought, with eyes following a somber daydream along the path. Though lacking words, they felt no lack; never before had they walked in such near understanding, shoulder to shoulder, spirit and spirit alongside. Wallace always remembered this final walk together.

So the day failed, and so they came by twilight into their bachelors' house among the plantains. Godbolt struck a match, and set a candle burning.

"Now," he commanded, "hold out your pinion, my duck."

When Wallace lay back in a chair at last, with his arm admirably slung, and the dull stupor of it clearing into pain, he let his mind swim between lethargy and a vague sense of personal escape. He saw Godbolt move the candle to a dressing table near by, and stand there clearing and loading his Webley. Something—the man's downward look, the careful movement of his hands, or perhaps the little taper shining on a white cloth—transformed his action almost to that of a priest before some lonely altar.

"You're to lay quiet, Rob." The sailor put the pistol under his jacket, and, turning, took his patient by the left hand. Not then, but in after days, it appeared that he was bidding farewell. "Mind you lay quiet. You're off duty hencefor'ard, well out of a bad pidgin, boy. I'll send Arthur in, to keep you company for a while."

At the door he paused. There was a kind of longing in his look.

"You spoke out noble this afternoon," he added cordially. "Noble. Francis Godbolt ain't the sort to go denying it. You cleared the air all round. Oliver Mace, we know his game now; wanted to pick us off separate, one by one; but we'll stop that, don't ye fret. Ho, ho! We'll h'ist Oliver in a moused hook, send him higher'n Gilderoy's kite!"

He ran down the veranda steps, crying:

"Adios, old Robin!"

After that it was Tisdale who met him, brushing away banana pennons on the path to Fraye's. He was no more than a shape hurrying through the gloom.

"Rob's waiting for ye, Arthur," he announced gayly, in passing. "You skip along. No, I'm busy. Got a thing to do. Some sense about this!"

The next person who saw him that evening, and the last friend who ever heard him speak, was old Thomas Fraye.

It was early starlight on the lagoon mirror, lamplight in the big room.

"Mr. Fraye," said Godbolt, entering bareheaded, cool, and with no sign of hurry, "it's a grand piece o' night outside. Ain't it?"

The old man lay reading in his chair, alone.

"You, Frank? I mean you, captain?" He lowered his book. "Yes, indeed, a very fine night. All well?"

The captain beamed.

"All well, sir. On the point o' being better. Fact is, I'm going for a row, to take the air. Can I borrow Anak? He's moping down round the jetty."

Fraye nodded, and said:

"No wonder I call you Frank. You behave like a son to me, captain. I—I muddle the pair of you into one, sometimes, thinking, after dark."

Godbolt smiled across the table. There stood between them a tray, with slender glasses round a yellow decanter. His face brightened, as if at some happy thought.

"The Cape o' Good Hope sherry, sir? Is that it? Good Hope. Sounds like an omen."

He leaned over, and with a steady hand poured a glass of wine, which he then raised. The light set it blinking.

"Tell Katherine"—his voice filled the room quietly—"tell Katherine I drank this to her, and all she can ever hope for."

He shut his fist over the empty glass, and crumpled it like so much paper; let the splinters trickle and tinkle into the tray; bowed, and stalked out through the main veranda.

Mr. Fraye heard his footsteps going down the garden path. His voice, afterward, hailing Anak on the jetty. Illness confused the old man's wits, for he lay comfortably, book in lap, and listened while a fatal beat of oars passed away toward southwestern stars, over the blue obscurity of the lagoon. Time slid by.

"He seemed so like her father," mused Age.

But Youth appeared at the door, all flushed and eager. Katherine ran in, with Tisdale following.

"Where is he?" they cried. "Sainty! Where's the captain?"

Fraye smiled at them.

"The captain has gone boating," he explained. "My dear, you may feel honored. He drank your health in broken glass, before he went——"

Katherine gave one look at the table, the tray, and the splinters glistening there. She let her arms drop slowly, as if the weight of that honor bore them down.

"To his death," she whispered, looking strangely about the room, like one who finds herself deserted. "For our sake, he has gone to his death. To Mace. We shall never see him again."

CHAPTER XVII.

A THING TO DO.

Katherine was wrong, in part. They were to see Godbolt once more, that very night; to behold him on the summit of his life, topping the last bright hill of a high journey.

What happened in the meantime, Anak told when all was done.

The sailor made for the jetty first, and called Anak to come help him. Then, from her shelter among ironwood boughs, they dragged the *Nantwich Number Two* down into the water, shoved her off, and shipped their oars. Godbolt, steering, hummed a funny little air—so droll, in fact, and so light-hearted, that Anak failed to watch their course or guess what terror lay before them.

"The Old Seventy-six they've sallied forth,
On their crutches they do lean,
With their rifles leveled on us
And their specs they take good aim—
Oh, there's no retreat, my boys, for them
Who'd rather die than run——"

So the steersman chanted happily, but no more loudly than the dripping oars. The boat stole onward, under a dome fretted with constellations. From the lagoon—heaven's liquid counterpart, night's floor—the rowing dug up shattered stars, and sent them like golden minnows whirling astern, to dart about profoundly, and rejoin, and heal the long scar of the wake.

"Or I fear that they will conquer us——"

There was no fear in the singer's voice. He liked his ballad.

"Or I fear that they will conquer us
As they conquered John Burgoyne
When he got too far from Canada—
Run for life, boys, run!"

Anak would gladly have obeyed this sentiment, when all at once, turning from his work, he saw the grayness of a beach close ahead, and knew it for the beach at Mango Island. Somebody was coming down toward them with a lantern. Anak dropped his oars, clattering.

"There, there!" Godbolt, as he climbed ashore, patted the giant's back. "Quiet, my son! Don't ye tremble so. Just ye wait. I got a thing to do; and if I don't bring ye a passenger inside o' twenty minutes, you can row straight home. There! And that case, you can tell 'em all's well, anyhow. In twenty minutes, Mace living, I'll fetch him prisoner. You wait, son; your part is easy."

The lantern now lighted them both, the wet nose of their boat, and a circle of yellow-gray strand. A wizened, implike figure bore this lantern.

"Hallo, Satrap!" chuckled the sailor. "How are ye? Master at home to-night?"

Satrap wore a blood-red cotton scarf round his throat, to ward off *sakit angin*, the air sickness that travels abroad after dark. He raised one end of the scarf, and rubbed his eyes with it, as

though to see more clearly a sight beyond belief.

"You?" he croaked. In the dim light, he seemed to be all cheek bones, ribs, and brown wrinkles. "You, Large Sir, in this place? Go back! You will die! Go back!"

Godbolt lowered a benevolent grin, and shook his head.

"I won't go back alone. Tuan Mace up at the house? Good!"

The Bugi opened wide his skinny arms, but Godbolt went dodging past into the darkness of the upper beach.

"This man will die," grunted Satrap, staring; then, after visible and painful indecision, he blew out his lantern, and ran to see whether he had spoken true.

Anak could not long endure that dark, lonely beach. He waited, growing more and more terrified, till with a whimper he leaped out of the boat and hurried inland. Ancestral fear of devils pushed him like a silent mob at his back; a great fascination pulled him on; so that between these two forces he found himself panting up the sand hill, running among trees toward a bright light, and presently kneeling in the dust of Mace's compound, behind a castor-oil bush. Satrap lay there, also, and shook as if the hot, still night was freezing him.

Mace's bungalow, before them, blazed with light—the infernal brilliancy of acetylene—which made his big main room a stage, a theatric setting. The whole interior shone ghastly through door and windows, barred here and there by the leaky mesh of wall, as by strips of porous curtain.

Godbolt had just entered the room.

"Good evening," he sang out, on the threshold.

Oliver Mace lay dozing in a chair, directly under the light, beside his favorite table and a quart of brandy. With chin on breast, lank arms and legs awry, he had sunk deeply into such a rumpled condition that his white trousers and white dinner jacket engulfed him with empty folds. At first glance, a stranger would have thought him drunk and torpid; but his long gray head was busy, after some fashion, for

he lay smiling, squinting down the edge of his nose.

It was a weasel nap, soon broken; a weasel's pair of eyes he lifted.

"Eh? What?"

The apparition of Godbolt brought him upright, with a shock.

"You here again? In my house?"

From that instant, neither man let the other evade him with eye, word, or hand.

They watched like rival conjurers. The devilish patent light was capital for this kind of dueling.

"What are you here for?"

"To arrest ye," replied the sailor calmly.

Mace puckered his thin brows.

"Arrest me?" He lay back at ease, very scornful. "Where's your authority?"

Godbolt came forward, and produced—without moving his eyes—a long envelope from his pocket. He backed away again.

"There. Read it. I won't move while you're reading."

It was Fraye's letter of marque. Mace took its contents in with half a glance.

"*Bote Salaam*, my lord high commissioner," he drawled. "A most imposing document. There's only one thing lacking—which is my consent. As for Thomas Masterman Fraye, he's more man than master to-night, I fancy."

And Mace tore the letter into bits.

"Where's your commission now?" he inquired, tossing them over the back of his chair.

Godbolt stood unmoved, with arms folded on his breast, where his tunic was unbuttoned.

"I've done my legal duty, Mr. Mace. You took service o' my paper. Tear it up or swallow it down; make a boy's windmill of it if ye so desire; the thing is done. You tried to let us eat a fish, other day. Call that a mistake. You had my friend, Rob Wallace, cowardly shot this afternoon in the sheep field. Ye want the whole island for your own, and—never mind what else ye want. By th' Eternal, ye shan't have it. I arrest ye."

Mace cackled.

"You born fool!" he answered dryly. "The boot's on the other foot. You're the man arrested—the man, by Jove, that walked into jail! Of all blind, oafish, lumbering conceit! Why, when you swaggered in just now, did it never cross your mind that I would hardly permit you to go swaggering out again?"

The sailor nodded. A smile played round his lips—a calm, pleasant little smile, that made his rejoinder infinitely grim.

"'Tain't no great of a mind," he admitted, "but something crossed it, Mr. Mace. As follows: I think unless we both walk out together quiet and peaceable, one of us is going to die right here in this room."

Mace peered up anew, more sharply even than before. When he spoke, his voice was not so harsh, but had a mingled note, as if some old frayed string of kindness were set vibrating.

"I withdraw my expression," he said. "You're no fool, or at least a brave one. Far too brave; far too rash, Mr. Godbolt." He waved his hand slightly toward the table. "Do you see my boat call there?"

A silver whistle lay shining beside the forgotten brandy.

"Saw that when I first came in." Godbolt's eyes did not swerve from the face below him. "What of it?"

"How if I should blow for help?" said Mace.

"Don't try," the other counseled gravely. "Before your old fingers carried that whistle to your mouth, the life would be blasted out o' ye."

Mace nodded his long gray head in approval.

"I see," he murmured. "Several things have crossed your mind, after all. My compliments. If you count on stopping me so quickly as you say, I take it you're armed? For a lark, now, let us make the experiment."

With a cool, playful air, the old scapegrace leaned toward the table, and let his right hand fumble near the silver boat call.

Godbolt laughed, and merely un-

crossed his arms. The dark pistol, which Wallace had seen him loading, glittered as if magic made it spring into his hand.

"Ah, now I follow you." Mace drew back, and lay quite composed. "Under your tunic, was it not? Are you—a marksman?"

Godbolt refolded his arms, but with the pistol barrel pointing over one elbow.

"I do what I can," he jested, "in a humble kind o' way. The only gift I got."

Mace awkwardly stretched out his legs. The motion brought him somewhat lower in his chair.

"A bold man, a bold plan," said he. "Unless I go with you quietly, as a prisoner, you will exercise your talent, and fire? At Fraye's, you'd put me under guard, wait till that young ass Walter brings the schooner home, and then—deport me? Was that your meaning?"

"To a hair," said Godbolt.

Overhead the patent light burned low for a moment, as some flying insect blundered through the flame. No more than a wink and a sputter, the tiny change made both men jump. Each had used a tone persuasive and bantering; each labored under a deadly strain; but when they felt room once more surcharged with light and stillness, it was Mace apparently who had suffered from that break of tension. He had slipped farther down in his chair, and let both arms dangle over-side. His face was white, sick, and moist.

"You'll fire if I don't go?" he repeated, in a creaking but indomitable voice. "Very well, sir. I won't go. Fire!"

Godbolt stared. This man looked up at him as a frightened patient might regard a surgeon, yet with a gleam of purpose, resolution, or mysterious hope.

"Come, fire!"

Godbolt freed his right hand slowly, pointing his weapon at the attic roof. He cleared his throat.

"I give you ten," he proclaimed, "to get on your feet."

And he counted the numbers aloud.

"Ten!" he called, with a strange, rising inflection.

The pair of natives hidden outside, behind the castor-oil bush, afterward said that at this point all the night seemed to be going by at once, and the house to stand still before them with the figures in it, very large and bright, but not alive, like a piece of devil work.

"Well?" broke out Mace. "Why don't you fire? Time—finish it, man! I won't budge!"

Indeed, the speaker lay quite limp in the bottom of his rattan chair, with left arm hanging to the floor, and right arm sunk in a pool of darkness under the edge of the table.

Godbolt suddenly moaned like a woman, and dropped both hands at his sides.

"Ye look old. Ye look sick. You're an old man! And in cold blood—Oh, what thing was I born for, then?"

Mace drew breath sharply.

"You can't!" he said. "You can't, fellow! You're beaten!"

"I'm beaten!" groaned the sailor, and hung his head.

"Now go!" advised his conqueror. "Go home in peace. I'm an old man, as you say; another evening like this would end me." Mace raised his left hand in token of dismissal. "I'm too weak for any more. Go in peace."

The hand was trembling inordinately.

"No peace any more." Godbolt shook his head. "I came to do it, and I failed."

He turned heavily toward the door. As he went, there came two sounds at once—a warning shout from the compound, a crackle of rattan behind him. The sailor wheeled, too late by half a second.

Mace had whipped his long arm from under the table, fetching up out of shadow a carbine. He fired point-blank.

Godbolt's pistol blazed harmless at the roof, even as that rushing wind of his deathblow took him full in the breast, and swept him down.

Mace uttered something which might have been a word, but was more like the

squeal of a rat. He jumped from his chair, and stood swaying. Silence followed, until the fallen man began to writhe, as if the mat beneath him were a wall, and he a climber. Then Mace took aim at the striving head, and fired again. And then Godbolt lay quiet, his face buried between his arms. The pistol had flown into a far corner.

"It carried!" Mace dropped his carbine into the chair, tottered near the table, seized his brandy, and drank deep. "The bare chance," he said, with a shudder; "the bare chance carried through! Hundred to one. Oh, what a battle!"

For a time he stared blindly at the white heap encumbering his floor. When he moved, he gave it a wide berth, and stole to the doorway only by a circuit.

"Who made that noise in the compound?" he called stridently. "Come, show yourself. I'm here. The fellow got in my way. I did it. I'll answer for it. Come, show yourself!"

The night refused to hear his argument. None of his retinue appeared; for often of an evening that veranda had rung with shots fired at an empty bottle—or at a moving shadow, as the master's playful mood might serve. Below the castor-oil bush, Anak and Satrap hugged the dust for dear life, and thought their turn was coming. It seemed to them that they had witnessed a wonder, an end-all.

But the real wonder was yet to begin.

"Noise? No," growled Mace. "Imagination. It's over."

Hot with brandy and success, the slayer faced the room again. He did not care, or was not able, to look before him clearly as he stumbled in. And therefore the shock fell heavier on him—heavy and cold as ice.

"Ah!" He recoiled, in vain. "I saw you——"

He had left Godbolt dead upon the floor. He met Godbolt living, erect, with wavering arms held forward to grapple and arrest him, in spite of victory. By a miracle of human will, the sailor, shot through the body and

through both cheeks, had reared and lurched forward, towering.

"Let go!"

Mace felt his throat collared by desperate fingers.

"Let go!" He tried to shout, but heard only a rasping whisper. No silly, kind heart now, no mercy to reckon upon; here was the final combat. "Let me—let me——"

Mace tore himself loose, and fell back, intending to reach the silver whistle, a yard or more away. This—so far as may be known—was the last of many muddled and bad intentions; for at a clap, all the arrears of sottish living descended on him, like a mallet on the skull. It was Oliver Mace this time who suddenly encumbered the floor, staring.

He lay there, dead, by a blow which no man might deliver.

When the two natives had convinced each other of this fact, they crept into the room.

"*Tobat?*" they crooned. "*Butool!* Can it be possible? It is true."

Godbolt kept his footing, had even a little strength to spare. He put forth his hand, took from Satrap's throat the red cotton scarf, and with an effort passed it round his own disfigured countenance, like a veil. He made a step toward the door; then wearily hung his arm over Anak's shoulder, and let the brown giant take him, half led, half carried.

The bungalow shone bright and vacant behind them. Only Satrap halted to glance back. He spat in that direction.

"Good!" he croaked. "Good now, master."

And, like a man unchained from bondage, he ran ahead to find and re-light his lantern.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NO MORE SEA.

"We shall never set eyes on him again," repeated Katherine. "Never speak to him. Oh, why did he go?"

She waited by a front window, questioning the night, the garden, the calm

solitude which covered such doubt and anguish, yet retained a spice of clove gillyflower, and a twinkle of starry water.

Young Tisdale, the ready man, could think of nothing to do or say.

Her grandfather gave a fretful cough. He had gathered the sound of her words, not the import. Extravagant language was a fault in her, to be corrected.

"The captain went boating, I tell you. He drank your health, and broke his glass in the good old fashion. I can't see why, for that reason, you roam about like a tragedy queen."

Katherine turned, imploring, half angry, half in tears.

"Oh, don't speak so now, dear grandfather!"

Tisdale saw a chance to be useful, and approaching the old man bent and whispered:

"Let her be, sir. The captain has gone over to Mace, for our benefit."

Thomas Fraye took the book out of his lap, carefully placed it on the table, and as carefully swung his feet clear from his chair. He found it hard to rise, but once risen, stood and moved like a young man. Through the rest of that evening nobody remembered his illness or his age. There was for him—now danger blew sharp enough upon them—a fire in old ashes.

"Kate," said he, "Kate, sweetheart, the captain will come back to us."

The girl raised her head with a fierce motion, as if to disown such comfort once for all.

"No!" she cried imperiously. "No! He's mine—my captain, my Francis! I won't have him back with blood on his hands."

The two men stared first at her, then at each other, confounded not only by the flashing pride of this avowal, but by her foresight. They had not thought of the one somber condition upon which the captain might return.

"If I could take his place——" began Tisdale ardently, then choked and remained silent, in great bitterness of spirit.

Her grandfather said the only possible thing:

"Keep a good courage, my dear." The old man joined her at the window, put his arm about her, and though his white head barely reached her shoulder, he spoke and moved so calmly, so promptly, so much according to his own advice, that he left no other course open but to be brave. "Don't think ill of the future. Or of the captain. He'll do nothing you wouldn't have him do, Kate. He won't stoop."

At this Katherine clung to him, and so the pair waited, each supporting the other, body and heart. Tisdale drew near. They both glanced up, and nodded, with a look of welcome and gratitude that was very like a smile.

A bush rustled. Somebody came through the garden.

It was only Wallace, with his arm in a sling.

"I couldn't stay alone," he muttered, pausing at the door.

"Of course not." Katherine beckoned. "I'm glad you thought of coming."

They made room for Wallace in their group. Nothing more was said. Silence filled the open parlor, except when the walls, their basket weave contracting in cool night air, made a rasping noise, or ticked like a loud and fitful clock.

"Here they come." It was the girl who spoke.

A new star had blossomed on the lagoon—a big, soft, yellow star, burning steadily at first, then winking in regular time to the hollow stroke of oars. Whom it lighted, and whose boat, were matters of vain guesswork and torture.

The yellow star sank below the beach, rose on the jetty as a common lantern, and came bobbing slowly through the garden. Round its passage there formed and melted a fringe or tunnel of things obscure—the scarlet heap of a rose-bush, green Poinciana leaves, and palm trunks visible as brown columns edged with misty gilding, like the edge of fur. Two large white-clad men labored, arm in arm, down this wavering, traveling vista of the night; a third, bent and

dwarflike, swung the lantern before them, step by careful step.

"He's hurt! Let me go, dear!" Katherine, first of all the watchers, had seen who was coming, and darted out to meet him on the steps. "Oh, Francis, Francis!"

In this wise Godbolt came home, his left arm round Anak's broad shoulders, his right upheld by her for whose sake its power had failed.

"Put him into my chair," old Fraye directed, shortly and sourly.

They carried him thither, placed him there under the lamplight, beside the table. Like a new kind of Moslem decoration, the blood-red cotton scarf muffled all his face up to the eyes, and hung broadly down over his left breast. He lay full length, a figure of silence and mystery.

"*Abis tuntu!* Surely it is finished!" cried poor Satrap, and set his lantern in the door, and squatted, cowering.

Godbolt's eyes, blacker than charcoal, gazed over the red bandage as from a distance. They moved slowly, greeting each frightened face above them. "I see you plainly," said their look. "I see you all." At last they met Katherine's eyes; and then, as if the spirit returned fiery swift at a call, they woke, sparkled, were flooded with their old-time luster. He raised his hands, and made a feeble motion like the motion of writing.

"What do you want, old fellow?" said Tisdale.

But Katherine understood, and, quickly crossing the room, brought back a pencil and a sketching tablet.

"Yes, dear." She closed the captain's fingers round the pencil, quietly knelt by the chair, and held her tablet steady. "Now tell us what it was."

The captain tried, and failed; then waited, gripped the pencil more firmly, and tried again. In big, schoolboy letters, a few words to the page, he wrote:

All well. Mace dead. I never did it.

Old Fraye read the message aloud. His granddaughter made some inarticulate sound. The tablet shook in her hands. Wallace relieved her of it. Tis-

dale relieved him, and tore off the written sheet.

"Oh, Francis, I knew!" she moaned. "I felt certain. You never could."

Godbolt's eyes contained a smile, part happiness, part irony.

"Come, my lad," the old man gently counseled, "it's time we saw how much you're hurt."

It was evident—from the pallor of Godbolt's forehead, as from that steadfast look of his—he was dying; and for answer he wrote again:

No' good, sir. They do not hurt a mite. Once in cheeks. Once in plural cavity. Can't spell him, but—

He let Wallace tear off another page, and continued:

But so the sawbones called him on a man I knew. My time short, don't lose none fretting.

His eyes closed, as if deliberation weighed them down; then opened, while he painfully inscribed the fourth page of his bulletin:

Get Arna to tell you.

"Anak?"

They turned on the huge manservant, who loomed uneasy in the background.

"Anak," said his master, "what has happened?"

Anak louted low, and reared his scrubby head again, six feet and a half toward the roof-tree. Still under the shadow of death, still in a tremor, he obeyed, and began to narrate what he had seen and heard of the night's work on Mango Island. At first the music of his voice was marred and broken; but as the story caught and carried him, as the spell of that hour and that audience made him forget the castor-oil bush and his ignoble fear behind it, the man's dark face began to work, his eyes rolled white, his limbs were freed in eloquent motion. He became an actor, bringing past fact bodily into the present. His primer English faltered and fell, his rhythm changed, and on the wings of his own language he swept with exaltation into a chant of war.

Brave men have lived before Agamemnon, and after; but few since the days of fable have had their doings

worthily rehearsed with passion, and sung aloud, as Anak now sang the deed of his terrible captain. The deed was over with; the poem only born. Anak, for years a hulking nondescript, had found the gift within him, loosed it, and become historian and bard.

"Everywhere," he sang, spreading his arms as he retreated on the close, "now everywhere there shall be peace!"

Thus Godbolt in his lifetime heard his own legend, which, by the will of chance or fate, should pass and grow from generation to generation upon the island. Perhaps he guessed a little of the truth, how poetry can seize a deed and change it into something better. At any rate, his forehead flushed, losing its mortal paleness; his eyes, over the red cotton barrier, appeared to be laughing. He reached out weakly for his tablet, and scrawled:

After all that, to know you failed!

But Katherine accepted the poet's version.

"There is no failure, dear," she whispered; "you took my quarrel on you, our quarrel. You did your best. If you had done less, I would not—be kneeling here."

His head drooped on his shoulder, so that he might see her where she knelt. In silence, on the brink of time, their eyes exchanged that light and triumph and fullness of understanding which no man truly knows but once.

Godbolt sighed. His heavy eyelids fluttered down, as if sleep were coming, and measureless content. He remained breathing.

"You're not in pain, Francis?"

He shook his head, slowly and restfully. A thing was yet to do; for soon he roused, looked on his tablet blindly, and printed a few more words.

All easy now. She floats. Way a cloud sails. High. Plenty sun all round—

His pencil dropped. The task was growing too hard, the distance too great. "She," the mystic boat carrying a soul, had sailed very high indeed.

Again and again the house, throughout its fabric, strained and chafed like

a basket overloaded. Between whiles, there was no more sound of the sea; hardly a sound of breathing.

"Francis, wait for me!" whispered the girl, in sudden terror. "Wait for me!"

He could not possibly have heard, or, hearing, understood. So thought all the bystanders. Yet he groped in his lap, until Arthur gave him the pencil, and once more held up the tablet. He wrote:

I will be round—somewhere.

His sunburned hand, strong even to death, relaxed and fell, but rose, trembled, and, growing white and stiff with resolution, made the last mark on the page:

Always.

Godbolt grasped the arms of his chair, essayed to lift his body, suffered the inevitable throe, and lay still. The bright cloud ship of his fancy had scraped her keel, no more, in gaining the fairway of our last harbor.

"Leave us alone," said Katherine.

Her grandfather led the young men down into the garden. Anak followed them, joyfully thinking of the poem he had made, and how the village would resound with it before that very midnight.

A lantern glowed beneath a rose-bush, and revealed the skinny form of Satrap crouching there. With a lump of gray coral in either hand, the friendless boatman beat his forehead, stroke on stroke without mercy, for so in ancient days his forefathers had learned to dull their grief.

The girl in the house had no such method.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PYRE.

Sunrise, two mornings later, gilded the gray sails of a schooner that made her way through the channel confidently, like one who knew her soundings and her landmarks. Before she had opened the lagoon full circle, one of her brown lookouts hailed the woods on the

port hand, expecting to hear the usual answer, to see the swineherds burst out from some fernbrake, and run down the beach waving eager arms. So always the swineherds welcomed the family schooner *Esperance*. To-day, however, the lookout called in vain; woods and beach gave back a timorous echo, and the *Esperance*, one hundred and eighty tons, Captain Corbin commanding, stole halfway across the shallow green light of the lagoon, brought up to an anchor in six fathoms, and evoked no sound from shore but further echo, the flying rumble of her own chains.

"I don't like this," remarked her master, at the ladder head. He was a round, red, burly little man, with a fair beard close-cropped, and droll blue eyes. His linen clothes were virginally white, his pumps and helmet crusted with pipe clay—all fresh for shore and lady's company.

"I don't half like this," he repeated. "Not a boat to meet us, Mr. Fraye. Devilish odd. Nobody fishing. And nobody stirring even on the pantalan."

He looked anxiously down the ladder. A clinker-built gig, shining with varnished cedar and brasswork, lay ready to put off. A pair of seagoing islanders in blue-and-white turbans held her at oar's length from the vessel.

"My dear Corbin," laughed a handsome young man, who lolled between the white-bound tiller ropes. "My dear Corbin, I had really begun to hope that, now your anchor's down, you might discharge your mind of dismal forebodings. The voyage was fairly successful, in spite of them, you must admit?"

Walter Fraye spoke with a gentle, drawling voice, like one who tolerates a rather silly world. A fine, slender, fresh-colored youth, with delicate features, and black eyebrows flexible as those of an actor, he had something too much of his sister's beauty. Mouse-gray clothes and a mouse-gray helmet made him appear slighter even than he was, and very sleek.

"'Twould do no harm," pursued the captain, frowning thoughtfully, "to take

a handful of men ashore. In case of trouble, Mr. Fraye——"

The youth was lighting a cigarette. He flipped the match overboard, and observed lazily:

"Thank you, Corbin. I'm quite competent to look after myself, in that case."

Corbin's honest face appeared to bulge and redden.

"Very good, sir!" he replied loudly, and, turning, stumped away aft.

"Not coming?" inquired Walter sweetly. "As you please, captain. I'll send the gig back for you." He shook the knotted ends of the tiller rope at his boatmen. "*Dayung!* Give way, there!"

"God go with you!" muttered Corbin.

There was little piety about this ejaculation, for it was in a boiling rage that the master of the *Esperance* took refuge under her double awning, ripped off *topi*, tunic, and pumps, and slatted himself into a rawhide chair. So, bare to the waist, with bare feet elevated on the rail, he buried his wrath in a paper novel, and in a mango, of which the golden pulp outshone his beard as he bit, now and then, slowly and ferociously. Half an hour later, he dropped his book, flung overboard the mango stone and rind, and blew off the rest of his mental steam.

"You call yourself her brother!" Corbin glared at his ten toes on the rail. "Her brother! 'Competent to look'—competent, yes, to look after number one. No fear. Silk-and-satin puppy! Talking so mild, as if your tongue was a wad of salve! Waugh! My word, I kept my temper the whole voyage, anyhow!"

Meanwhile, unaware that any tempers might be ruffled, Walter Fraye had steered his course for the jetty, lounging with a pleasant fragrance of Cavalla tobacco in his nostrils, urbane satisfaction in his heart. The young man took things urbanely always; never more so than on this bright, springlike morning, as he was rowed home in triumph, a fortnight ahead of the appointed time, with great good news for his family. Let grandfather and Katherine show all the exultation.

"Time they should," he reflected, smiling. "They were quite in the wrong, as I told them when I left. The old governor has some rather peppery words to eat, I fancy."

A glorious bit of weather, he noted; the lagoon such a vernal green—green as young buds—that color which one sees in a French picture of spring; the shore woods so dark and virile—painted flat; and the sky beyond, glowing without a cloud, so blue.

"A regular 'penitential blue,'" he sighed. "Good phrase, 'penitential.' Wonderful phrase, that of pater's."

He flung away his cigarette, to swing the boat alongside the jetty ladder.

"*Ati ati! Bai!*" he told the admiring rowers; then dropped the tiller guides, and climbed the ladder.

The *Esperance* never came home and sent in her boat but half the village thronged this landing stage. To-day not a soul had come there, or to the beach, or to the shadowy depth of the garden.

"It is odd!" Walter, sleek and deliberate, sauntered up the narrow platform with a feeling of disappointment. "I do think somebody might have met us. They can't all be asleep."

Entering the grove, he heard a sound which made him pause and listen; a murmur of many voices from somewhere beyond the house—the stir and rustle and subdued buzzing of a multitude.

"Corbin was right," he acknowledged. "It's devilish odd."

He hurried through alleys of rose-bush and honeysuckle, meeting no one, growing more and more uneasy, till he ran up the steps and through the veranda.

"Oh, here you are, then!" he called, in relief.

Four persons occupied the room. His grandfather stood talking with two strangers—two sad-faced young men, one of whom carried a broken arm in a sling. Katherine, by the door beyond, was looking out into the farther grove. All four turned, and regarded him with the same listless air, as though he caused some trivial interruption.

"Back, are you?" remarked his grandfather in an undertone, extending a casual hand. "This is Walter, Mr. Tisdale—and Mr. Wallace. You've heard me speak of my grandson."

Walter stared. He could always pass on a snub, however, to men of his own age.

"How are you?" he said, nodding barrenly as he went by them. "Hallo, Kit, old fellow!"

This was a strange and very flat home-coming. Where were the heated questions he had foreseen, and prepared cool answers for? Katherine, his own tomboy sister, instead of crying out and rushing, silently turned, walked toward him with a dreamlike dignity, kissed him once on the cheek, and withdrew to her doorway. All the village stood out there, close packed in the sunshine, wearing their brightest clothes and holiday garlands. The hum of their voices filled the room.

"You've come in time, Walter," said old Fraye.

The youth wheeled angrily.

"Sir," he announced, in his blandest manner, "I thought I'd done more. I thought I was bringing news. You may care to know that I reached my friend Laurie by the cable. Government House has acted, he tells me, at last. Things are definitely set in motion; so much so that his chief has arranged with the senior naval to send us a gunboat of sorts within the month; the flag is to be raised for you, letters-patent to be read out, and a grant in fee handed to you. We so often wished for this very thing, sir, I thought you might be pleased to hear it's almost on the way. But if I only spoil your festival——"

The old man checked him with a sudden gesture and a look of pain.

"Hush, lad! You don't understand. All that politics may wait now."

Even while he spoke, the outdoor murmuring ceased. From the farthest outskirts of the crowd, a few voices had begun a song or chant, which, taken up by other voices, gradually swelled into a great volume of music, pouring through the house, filling all the sunny

compound and the eastern grove. Movements ran likewise through the many-colored assembly, for all at once the center of it melted and jostled into a column, marching outward from the house, men and women beckoning with brown arms as they marched. The rest, like water that streams from an eddy, fell into line behind them.

"Come!" said Katherine. "They have started."

Walter, amazed, went out with her into the sunlight. This was no festival. These natives, trooping and chanting in all their finery and scented garlands, led the way toward something he well knew by hearsay, vaguely remembered out of babyhood. It was the procession to the pyre, a great ceremony never performed since his mother's death, three years after he was born. This concerned the family. Who could be dead now? He glanced at Katherine. She walked beside him, still like a woman in a dream. Her eyes followed the marching chorus, into the grove and up the seaward slope. He glanced behind. The governor was being carried in his chair, which those two strangers accompanied, one on the right hand, one on the left. A band of sullen rascals brought up the rear—Mace's vagabonds, following with an obsequious, hangdog air, like captives, or men unwilling to be left out.

"Kit," he whispered, "what the dickens? All this is never done outside the family. It can't be for——" An incredible thought crossed his mind: "Is old Mace dead?"

Katherine, very pale, would not move her eyes toward him.

"Yes," was her answer. "And Francis. Too long to tell you now, dear."

Walter shrugged his shoulders. No man could be expected to read this form of riddle. "They treat me like a child," he fumed. "Here's a thing entirely new which concerns the family; and they won't explain."

Alive with shifting color and melody, the islanders, four to eight abreast, now climbed that slow-rising, undulant path, that endless nave among the palms, the like of which St. Peter and St. Paul could never build in marble pillars, or

light with such a green clerestory, or fill with such a choir, singing pagan words.

"Gone is the sun at noon,
The bright land and the blue crying sea,
For him are blackness;
Sun, tree, and surf, no more.
The soul of man departs, a diving fish,
A gleam into the dark.
There is no more but evening space
Where he abides;
Yet in that space the stars
Have birth and motion, powers unseen, by
day
Shall hail him brother——"

Young Fraye caught snatches of this hymn. They did not clear his mind. He saw, on the shoulders of the tallest men ahead, a ridge of flowers red and white, crossed by the red-and-white stripes of an American flag, with a fold or so of starry blue jack. What stranger's bier was given all this honor?

The song now straggled up the last low crest, to fail on the edge of woods and earth; for here the roaring sea quenched all other voices. To right and left the column parted, men and women ranging themselves under the final trees. Only the four tall bearers went forward into the glare, and laid their flowery burden on a high green mound—a heap of sandalwood leaves, that stood on the outer limit of white coral ledge. One of the bearers, when they returned, brought the flag in his arms.

Walter, the two young strangers, the grandfather in his chair, and Katherine clasping his hand, were grouped in the shade by the granite boulder, the home rock.

A tall, thin, very aged figure in white—the village headman—limped out alone toward the mound of sandalwood leaves. He held in his hand a torch, inverted. It was of coir, drenched with land-crab oil, and burned fiercely, though appearing, in that vast glow of air and sea, to be extinct, but for its writhing shadow on the white floor.

At the mound, the aged figure bent, parted the sandalwood leaves, thrust in the torch, and limped away.

The pyre was well prepared. Almost at once, and without smoke, a huge

clear flame shot up against the background of charging surf, against the blue band of ocean, against the sky.

Walter presently turned, shielding his face from this added heat.

"Katherine, will you please tell me who——" he began, with subdued impatience.

His sister watched the fire and the whirling sparks that had been leaves.

"Look on the rock," she answered, not moving her eyes.

Walter looked. To his unbounded wonder, he saw in the granite, under his father's time-darkened bronze, a bright new tablet, bearing the name:

FRANCIS GODBOLT.

The youth appealed to his grandfather.

"But who——" he stammered. "I never heard of him. He was not one of us!"

"Was he not?" replied the old man testily. "I can't help that, sir."

As for the two strangers, they paid no heed. The heavy, dark young man with the broken arm stared at some trailing periwinkle beneath his feet, and bit his under lip. The other man, Tisdale, stood rapt, his blue eyes wide and motionless and bright, as though he had seen a glory pass in that high flame against the sea.

CHAPTER XX.

TWILIGHT.

Ten days later, at sunset, Arthur Tisdale stood in the big room alone. He was there for a purpose, having slipped away while Captain Corbin and Wallace entertained each other in the bachelors' bungalow. To-night was their last night on this island, for to-morrow the *Esperance* would sail. Arthur had therefore come once more to look at something.

Daylight was already gone from the room, leaving a soft obscurity along the floor and in the corners. The thing that had drawn him there hung on a plaited wall from which the color of burned gold was fading.

"She did that well," thought Arthur,

as he took his range between the two doorways. "She did it marvelously."

The thing—a portrait—looked out at him from the dusk. Unframed, unfinished, it was the canvas that Katherine had painted by the sea beach, not many evenings ago. She had done well, indeed. From a hazy limbo of green and brown, as from deep sylvan twilight, Godbolt himself was glancing forth, askance, in his old, familiar way. The painting revealed his face, and that only, except where a touch of gray, like the glimmer of a dull breastplate, showed that once his body had been large and solid.

"There you are, Sainty, for all time," thought Arthur. "It's good—but not the whole of you."

He stood wondering, a plain man confronted by the greater plainness of art. What was it that he missed, while he admired?

A sound of voices broke his reverie. He was not alone, as he had hoped to be; for some one had spoken, and some one else replied, outside the open windows of the back veranda. He heard the voice of Katherine.

"Waiting?" it said. "But that is so long, grandfather."

Old Thomas Fraye allowed several moments to pass.

"My child," came his tranquil answer, "I have waited about fifty years, all told."

Another silence followed.

"But that," said the girl's voice, "that is very long."

"Why, no!" replied the elder cheerfully. "Not so long. Time flies, and there are many persons to share it with. We're all waiting, sweetheart. We do what we can in the meantime. But the truth is, all of us are waiting."

The speakers remained unseen in their quiet corner. Loath to overhear, but very loath to go, Arthur stole one more look at the countenance of his friend. Something—perhaps the gathering darkness—had come to his aid; for now he understood what the portrait lacked. There was the man Godbolt, ready to speak, and yet divested of

all speech, of all rough, uncouth, daily imperfection. The dross had gone, ashes had returned to ashes. Linger- ing in that twilight, he chose only to un- veil his face—his face kind and proud, sensitive, sad, and loyal.

"The spirit," thought Arthur, "with- out the body." And of a sudden, the old truth pierced him for the first time keenly. "The spirit is greater."

A footfall sounded in the room. He turned, and saw Walter Fraye ap- proaching.

"Good thing, that," observed the sleek newcomer, with a nod at the por- trait. "Don't you find it so? I never saw the fellow, of course, but I think Kit has done herself uncommonly proud."

Tisdale did not reply. For a moment the two young men stood side by side.

"Handsome devil," continued Walter, the critic. "Rather like Bonny Dundee, don't you think? Without the love- locks, of course."

Tisdale agreed, for courtesy.

"Odd stick he must have been," said Fraye, "by all account. Good chap, but not in any sense a—— Pity he should go get himself killed for nothing."

Twilight now veiled the face from all observers.

"I'm not sure it was a pity," rejoined Arthur, with infinite forbearance. "I'd rather not discuss—— He was my friend."

And Arthur left the room. He had some vague intention of going back to join Wallace—good, honest, dull old Rob—and the skipper of the *Esperance*. In the garden, however, he came to a standstill, and remained there, thinking. Pity? It was no pity. Walter Fraye had set him in a rage, not only on his friend's account, but on his own; for in that young urbanity he had discov- ered himself as in a living mirror, facile, cold-hearted, pleased with his own free- dom.

The garden held an old-time spice. He looked on the ground before him, and saw a bed of clustered colors, dim in the evening light.

"Sainty's gillyflowers," he said aloud. "Living still! I must tell Katherine." And to himself: "I wish I could feel sure, as Katherine does, about that waiting."

While he stood inhaling a memory, doubting the future, there came as it were news from beyond. Many a time Tisdale had heard the sea, as a weary noise; but now in the garden, in the flowered gloom and sweetness, he was aware of a vast, uncertain thrill, a far cry sounding through the eastern trees. A new voice, yet very old, it called him without haste.

The young man laughed.

"I understand," he said. "We over- take our friends. All right, old fellow, I begin at the starting point."

THE END.

We are planning to give you TWO COMPLETE NOVELS in the first December POPULAR—one of them a political novel by FRANCIS LYNDE, the other a serio-comic novel of adventure by Robert Welles Ritchie. On sale two weeks hence, November 7th.



THE RIGHT WAY TO BE ABSENT-MINDED

J. VAN VECHTEN OLCOTT, of New York, tells the story of how Rufus Choate got from a witness the finest definition ever heard of absent-mindedness.

"What do you think is absent-mindedness?" asked Choate, who was putting the witness through a hot cross-examination.

"Well," replied the witness, in a slow, deliberate tone, "if a man who thought he had left his watch at home, took it out of his pocket to see if he had time to go back and get it, I would call him a *leetle* absent-minded."

The Princess of Wacheko

By William Slavens McNutt

Author of "Bill Heenan, Postman," "A Real Square Guy," Etc.

The mystery of a girl—a waif of the sea—who for a time reigned as Princess over a little mining camp pinned on the ocean-tattered hem of a wild, strange, lonely land in the chill shadow of the pole

THEY called her "The Princess"; and this is the tale of her reign over Wacheko, a little mining camp on the southwestern coast of Alaska.

Wacheko consisted of a general store and post office, three combination saloons and gambling houses, a small dock and warehouse, and a half a hundred of cabins; all glued onto the short in-step of the precipitous glacial mountain that reared behind, just above where the ocean-wide charge of wind-spurred waves thundered to destruction against its great rock foot.

Joe Vinton sighted her first in the morning of a day in May; a dot on a small life raft that pitched on the heaving bosom of a storm-frenzied sea, a half mile out from the little dock.

Vinton summoned "Doc" Russell, the owner of the store, and the only other man in camp who was neither at work in the mine above, nor asleep at that hour of the morning, and together they launched a dory in the lee of a small island a few hundred yards below the dock, and fought their way out to her.

She was lashed to the roughly constructed raft, and unconscious when they reached her. Nude but for a night-dress and a long, richly trimmed seal-skin coat, buttoned tightly about her, she made a pitiful picture lying rudely lashed on the pitching raft. Her long golden hair was unbraided and awash in the swirl of water that flooded the raft; an undulant, lacy web about a small, clear-cut face, whose dainty prettiness

spoke even through the pallid chill of cold and terror that was on it.

Vinton unlashed her and drew her as gently as he might into the boat, to hold her tight in his big arms while Doc rowed furiously for the lee of the island and a safe landing place. Big tears of pity rivuleted down Vinton's weather-beaten face as he sat in the stern of the tossing boat, cradling the unconscious girl in his arms with clumsy tenderness.

"She's livin', Doc. She's livin', all right," he called to the desperately toiling Russell. "She's breathin', an' I can feel her heart beat. What's the matter with ye? Why don't ye row? Aw, say! Pull hard, Doc. She'll be dyin' any minute if we don't get her in. Pull, will ye?"

A bruised gash discolored the white of her smooth skin above one eye. Vinton touched it lightly with a shaking hand that could have amputated his own leg without a tremor, and his big features were convulsed with an agony of pity as he caressed it.

"Aw! Aw, that's awful! That's awful!" he blubbered. "Poor little girl! Aw, that's awful! My, gee, that ain't right! Say, ain't ye got no sense, Doc? Whyn't ye pull? She'll be dyin', Doc. Whyn't ye pull?"

"I've pulled—the soles—o' my feet—clean up into—my throat now!" Russell panted back between strokes. "If I pull—any harder—they'll step on my tongue!"

They landed at last, and Vinton scrambled ashore with the girl in his

arms to rush headlong for camp, leaping up the narrow, rocky trail that wound around the abrupt shoulder of the hill with the sure-footedness and springing power of a moose.

He carried her into Doc's little bedroom, curtained off at the rear of the store, and laid her on the cot. Then he ran back in the store to return with several rolls of blankets snatched from one of the shelves. With reverent hands he stripped the girl of her water-soaked cloak and wrapped her tight in the warm, dry fold of the heavy blankets. He was holding a brandy flask to her chilled lips when Russell panted in.

"Is—is she livin', Joe?"

"Yes. She'll come to pretty soon, I think. She ain't banged up anywhere except just over her eye here, an' that ain't deep. Get that fire a-roarin' while I 'tend to her."

"Some ship gone flooey, all right," Russell said as he stoked the wood stove. "We ought to set a lookout on the hill. Might be some others blow in. How long ye reckon she'd been driftin'?"

"I dunno. Must 'a' got wrecked last night, though. She couldn't last an awful long while as cold as it is. Rustle a hot soup together, Doc. She needs somethin' besides this here brandy. She—— 'S-s-s-s-sh! She's comin' to."

A slight tint of color spotted the girl's cheeks, and a weak, strangling cough nodded her head slightly forward from the hollow of Vinton's embracing arm. It fell back limply, and her lids slowly lifted from the blue of her eyes to let them stare wonderingly up into Vinton's face.

"Where—where am I?" she faltered bewilderedly. "Where is—what——"

"Everything's all right, miss. You're all safe here. Just you——"

Remembrance flooded the girl's eyes and bore terror on its sudden wave. Her arms went about Joe's neck in a frantic clutch.

"Oh! We're sinking! Look! Look! The water's coming in!" she screamed. "Oh, we're—— Captain! The water's coming in! Everything's—— Oh!

Help! Help! I can't hold on! I can't——"

Vinton gripped her shaking shoulders tight in his two big hands, and, holding her convulsed face close to his own, stared commandingly into her fear-crazed eyes.

"You're all right! Everything's all right!" he asserted slowly. "You're safe! Do you hear? Safe! I'll take care of you. You're safe!"

Her wildly staring eyes gradually became centered on his calm, compelling ones as his deep, reassuring voice penetrated the din of roaring water and rending wood with which her mad imagination tortured her. She stared at him in dazed silence for a long minute, and then, with a sudden, fleeting smile of assurance, she was fast asleep in his arms.

"She's all right now, I reckon," he said. "Best let her sleep as long's she will. She couldn't 'a' been driftin' long enough to be starved much. Better let her sleep 'n to wake her up to give her anything to eat."

"I reckon. I'm goin' over an' rout out Larsen to go up on top the island an' keep a lookout, case any more show up. Say, she'll need some clo'es an'—an' things when she wakes up, won't she? Sure! I reckon she ought to have a woman fussin' around, too. I'll run down to Dutch Mary's an'——"

"You will not!" Vinton interrupted him savagely. "You won't have Dutch Mary, nor none o' her tribe fussin' around her. Not while I'm on two legs! Whyn't ye have a little sense? This girl's a lady, I'm tellin' ye. A real lady! If ye ain't got sense enough to know it by lookin' at her, take a flash at that coat o' hers. Sealskin coats like them cost somethin' back where she come from. Yes, sir, she's a real lady, an' ye ain't goin' to bring none o' that riff-raff around where she is!"

"Well, what ye goin' to do? There ain't no other women in camp, an' she's got to have some clo'es an'——"

"Go down an' get that young *klooch* o' Pete Simmons'. He bought her a whole raft o' duds when he was down to Valdez last, an' she's mission raised, an'

she knows a lot about nursin'. Go get her."

Late that night the rescued girl was still sleeping soundly. Huddled in a corner on the floor the young Siwash nurse nodded drowsily. Vinton and Russell sat by the stove speculating on the girl's identity in low tones.

"J arsen was up on the hill all day," Russell said. "An' he didn't sight nothin'. Mebbe some of 'em made the coast somewheres else; but I dunno— She was pretty rough last night. What boat d'ye reckon she could 'a' been on?"

"I dunno. The Nome boats ought to be runnin' by this time; but what'd a lady like her be doin' on one o' them? There wouldn't be no tourists on that run this early in the season. Might 'a' been one one o' the Valdez boats that got blowed out o' her course; but if y' ask me, I'm thinkin' she's off a private yacht. She's got all the earmarks of a real lady, I'm tellin' ye. I'm layin' my money she's off some private yacht that was out on a pleasure cruise. Mebbe comin' from Japan an' got——"

He became aware that the girl's eyes were open and fixed on him. He rose and bent over her.

"Everything's all right, miss. Don't ye be one mite scared. You're all safe an' sound here, all right. D'ye want anything——"

"Where am I?"

"This here's Wacheko, miss; a minin' camp on the Alaska coast. We got a Siwash woman here waitin' to——"

"What—whose house is——"

"This here's Doc Russell's store, miss. Don't ye be scared. Doc an' me'll keep a good watch out for ye, all right. Would ye like——"

"How did I get—where——"

"We found ye tied onto a raft out to sea a piece, miss. I reckon ye must 'a' been mixed up in a shipwreck. What boat was ye on?"

The girl closed her eyes and lay silent for several moments.

"It was father's yacht," she said finally.

"But—well, what was the name of it? We might——"

"I don't know."

"Ye don't—— Well—well, what name d'ye go by, miss? Mebbe——"

"I don't know."

"Well—but can't ye remember——"

"I can't remember anything. Please! I'm quite tired and hungry. Won't you see to ——"

"Excuse me, miss! Certainly. I'll get you—— Hey, Nellie, wake up here! You 'tend to the lady, now. Whatever she wants, you—— Doc an' I'll step out, miss. Nellie here, she'll see to you, all right an' proper. I'll bring supper in for ye right away, miss. We'll step out now an' let ye—er—— Don't be scared, miss. Not a mite! Doc an' I'll look out for ye."

They passed out through the deserted store in silence. A group of men gathered about the front greeted them eagerly. "She woke up yet? Who is she? What boat's she off of?" they all questioned at once.

Doc told them what had occurred.

"It's a kind of a sickness," Vinton said. "I read in the paper about a guy that got took with it. It's—it's—I dunno. I misremember the name of it, but it's some sort of a sickness."

"Don't know her own name!" one of the men said wonderingly. "Well, wouldn't that phase you!"

"That's it! That's it!" Vinton cried excitedly. "I knowed it all the time, 'n' I couldn't say it. Aphasia! That's what it is she's got. It's that sickness I was tellin' ye about. Aphasia."

"She's some rich guy's daughter or wife, all right," said Doc. "Joe was bettin' she was a lady off some private yacht, an' I reckon he wins. He asks her what boat she was on, an' she sez: 'Father's yacht.' An' that was all we could get out of her. Well, mebbe she'll get her senses back after she's rested up a bit."

But she didn't. A week passed, and many were the methods employed by Vinton and Doc to solve the combination of the mental lock that had fastened the door of practically total oblivion on her life prior to the time she had waked on the cot in Doc's room.

The fragments of her past that were

available to her recollection were vivid enough, but utterly worthless as a means of identification. She had been on her father's yacht. What was the name of it? She didn't know. What was her father's name? What did he look like? What was his business? Where was the yacht going? Where was it coming from? How was it wrecked? The answer to all these questions was the same; she didn't know.

Her home she described in some detail, and the description was that of a mansion in a big city. What city? She didn't know.

She had been given Russell's quarters in the rear of the store for her own, and Doc had moved to Vinton's shack. At the end of two weeks of fruitless searching for some scrap among the mental debris of the wreck of her memory that would be of service as a means of identification, Doc and Vinton held a consultation with the girl as to the further means to be employed in a search for her people.

"There ought to be a boat in in a week or so," Vinton told her. "Mebbe ye ought to go below on her an' see what ye can do in Seattle. Ye ought to be able to get a line on your people, somehow, from there, all right."

The girl grew pale. "But how?" she questioned. "I don't know—— Oh, I'm afraid! I'm so afraid! Please don't send me away! Everybody in the world is strange to me now but you. I might not—— Oh, I'm afraid!"

"There, there, don't worry!" Vinton cut in hastily. "Nobody's goin' to send you nowhere you don't feel like goin'. You stay right here, an' I'll mush over to Valdez an' telegraph below, see what I can find out."

Three weeks later Vinton returned, trail worn and despondent. He had learned nothing that would aid them, and much that served to deepen the mystery.

"Couldn't get no line on no yacht that might 'a' been up in these waters," he reported. "They ain't got no news o'

any boat o' any kind bein' wrecked up here lately. I found out as much as I could by telegraph, an' then I wrote the whole business to the chief o' police down in Seattle, an' sent the letter below by the captain o' the *Bertha*. I wrote the chief to do all he could, an' if he got any news to leave us know right off. The boats from Valdez'll be in right often for the rest o' the summer, an' they'll bring us up any word comes there."

"Did ye see Al Timmins?" Doc asked.

"Yes," said Vinton, "I see him, but there's nothin' doin'. He grubstaked a guy for a trip up the Su; an' Al's heard he hit pay, so he won't leave, an' he won't let his girl come alone. She's tendin' store for Nelson down there now."

"Couldn't ye get a line on any other girl?"

"No," answered Vinton. "None you'd want around the store. Doc wanted me to get him a girl to work in the store here," he explained to The Princess, in answer to her look of inquiry. "Al Timmins' daughter was the only——"

"Oh, let me!" the girl exclaimed delightedly. "Please!"

"I reckon ye don't understand, miss," Vinton answered a little roughly. "Doc wants a girl in the store so's the gang'll hang out here an' spend their coin on his junk an' knickknacks rather'n bum around the gamblin' house. I reckon I ain't goin' to let him set you up as no opposition attraction to a gamblin' house, miss. Not that Doc means anything wrong by it—he don't; but you'd have to chin with them roughnecks, an'——an' sell 'em stuff an'—— Good Lord, miss! You're a lady. Ye ain't been raised right to——"

"I can easily imagine more degrading positions than that of being an attraction to keep men away from a gambling house," the girl interrupted him coldly. "My mind is quite made up, Mr. Vinton. I'm quite sure the men won't be rude or ungentlemanly to me in any manner."

Vinton's lips tightened, and his nails

bit half moons in the palms of his suddenly clenched hands.

"I reckon not!" he said meaningly.

And thus began the reign of The Princess over the little camp pinned on the ocean-tattered hem of a wild, strange, lonely land, where black is sometimes green or bright pink; where fragmentary lengths of river bed rest on high mountain peaks, and men's minds often act in accord with the chaotic topsy-turviness of a world fantastically molded by some star-heard quake, and cooled in the chill, weird shadow of the pole.

Her reign was like unto that of the good princesses of the fairy tales. The lonely men of the camp rendered her all the respect and deference due one of her evidently high station in the life whose record the terror of her experience in the storm had erased from the tablets of her memory; and she gave in return a full measure of her daintily feminine companionship and comradely interest.

The store was always crowded at night with a roughly deferential crowd of men, a-hunger with a bitterness that only men alone on the world's wild rims can know, for the saving sense of a good woman's presence in their hardship-toughened hearts.

They came to her simply with letters from their wives and sweethearts in the land of love and homes to the southward. They blushing opened lockets and took pictures from inner pockets to show to her. Some bore the images of little children; some of wives and mothers, with the hint of an instinctive, uncommunicable knowledge of the Infinite Secret in their eyes—the ethereal light kindled of motherhood.

From some, sweethearts gazed with the wistful questioning of 'girlhood; sweethearts whose eyes were then turned much toward the northland, where the men who should happily answer the riddle that vexed them toiled; searching for the rainbow's end; delving in a frozen hell for the golden key to an earthly paradise!

On the wounds of all she poured the

ointment of her comprehensive sympathy and cheering hope, and they went away soothed and healed, with the glow of chilled embers of belief rekindled warm in their hearts.

She nursed and comforted those who were ill or injured, visiting their cabins freely, ever protectingly hedged with the aura shed about her by her "ladyhood." They treated her almost as a creature of another world. She was "a lady" in all that the word implied to them—"the lady off the yacht"—and they rendered her the almost idolatrous deference they imagined such a one must always have received.

If this were not enough to hold her inviolate from any unwelcome attention of any sort, there was big Joe Vinton! He was her shadow. Gloomy, uncommunicative, silently unapproving of her comradely freedom with the men of the camp, furtively watchful, he followed her everywhere.

Was there a crowd gathered about her in the store? Vinton was on the edge of it, warily alert for the slightest hint of a questionable word or action. Did she visit some sick miner in his cabin? Vinton was near—silent, sullen, grimly tenacious in the performance of his duty as a self-appointed watchdog.

It was late in the evening of a day in May, in the spring of the year following the girl's strange advent into camp. The store was well filled with a crowd that thinned as a small steamer came in sight around the island and headed for the dock.

The Princess was cheerily busy back of the long counter that ran the length of the store on one side; making change, wrapping up purchases, nodding to this newcomer and pausing a moment to chat with that.

Joe was there, as usual, sitting on a long bench in the rear, watchful, silent, sullen. The men who had gone out to watch the steamer dock began straggling back by ones and twos.

"It's the *Mallard* with a little jag o' freight," one of them reported. "No passengers nor mail on her. Sailin' for below as soon as she unloads."

A few moments later the purser of the boat hurried in.

"'Evening, boys," he greeted them all; and then to The Princess: "Say, wrap me up a half a dozen plugs o'— Well, for the love of Mike!"

He stood still for several moments staring at the girl in silence, transfixed with an astonishment that had something of almost terror in it. He passed his hand over his eyes and laughed a little shakily.

"By George, but you did give me a turn for a minute!" he said. "I thought I was seeing ghosts for sure! Everybody gave you up for lost." He advanced toward her with outstretched hand. "Don't look at me that way. It's me, all right—flesh an' blood. Shake hands an' see. I don't wonder you're kind of shocked at seeing me. I suppose you thought I was a goner when the old——"

Joe Vinton was by his side, gripping his arm. "Hold on there, pardner," he said. "D'ye know this lady?"

"Know her? Certainly I know her! Wasn't I——"

"Then who is she?"

"Who is she? Why, she's—she's——" He hesitated for a moment, winked at the girl behind the counter, and continued: "Why, she's whoever she's a mind to be, I suppose. It ain't up to me to stake you to an introduction unless the lady wants me to."

"Don't get off wrong, pardner. This lady come ashore here tied onto a raft a little over a year ago, an' she ain't never been able to rightly remember her name, nor who her folks was, nor anything much. Now, who is she?"

The purser suddenly exploded with laughter. "Can't remember her name, hey?" he gurgled. "That's a good one, that is. My memory's no better than yours, kiddo," he went on, addressing the girl. "I can't remember your name, either. I never saw you before. Give me a half a dozen plugs o' blackstrap, an' slip me a kiss for a souvenir an' I'll——"

The fingers of Vinton's left hand wrapped the leering man's throat in a savage clutch and throttled him into si-

lence. His right fist smashed into the purpling face again and again, and it streamed with bright red. The girl rushed from behind the counter and clutched the punishing arm.

"Oh, don't, Joe! Don't!" she begged. "For my sake, Joe! Don't! You'll kill him! Please!"

Vinton flung the battered purser to the floor and turned to the girl. "D'ye know that dog, miss?" he panted. "D'ye reckon ye know him?"

"No, no!" she sobbed. "I don't know him, Joe. I never saw him before; but let him go, Joe, let him go—please! He—he made a mistake, Joe—that's all. He takes me for some one else; some one I resemble, perhaps. Don't——"

"Resemble—hell!" the bleeding purser screamed, struggling to his feet. "Gimme a chance, you fellows! I'll tell you who she is, all right. She's Nellie Marsh; that's who she is! Daughter o' old Sam Marsh, the slickest all-round crook an' card shark that ever run the Pacific liners! Forgot her name, hey? Good reason why! She's run the liners with Sam ever since she was old enough to wear long dresses! She's steered the boobs for him from Melbourne to Yokohama! She's a crook——"

He ducked back into the crowd as Vinton made a rush for him.

One of the men grasped the infuriated Joe and held him back.

"Hold on there, Joe!" he said. "Let's hear the rest o' this. He can't get away; an' if he's lyin' I reckon we'll 'tend to him all proper; but let's get this thing straight."

Vinton mastered his fury with a visible effort and stepped back beside the girl. The man who had stopped him spoke to the purser.

"Go on," he said. "Spin the rest o' this yarn, an' be mighty certain you can back your talk with some kind o' proof."

"I've known her for five years," the purser went on. "She an' her old man's traveled boats that I was workin' on. Last I saw of her was aboard of Walden's yacht—Walden, the lumber man from Frisco—I was head steward on

the yacht an' she was Mrs. Walden's maid. I don't know what she was up to; framin' some job for her gang, I suppose. Anyhow, I kept my mouth shut 'bout her; worse luck! We run into a storm an' got blown out of our course—Frisco bound from Yokohama—an' the yacht sank off this coast. She an' I were on the same raft; but I got washed off. One o' the lifeboats run across me; an' the next day, a freighter, Yokohama bound, sighted us, an' picked us all up except her. We thought she was done for. Can't remember her name, hey? I'll tell her what her name is; an' what her game is, too! She's Nellie Marsh, an' she's a crook!"

Vinton's face was chalk white from the suppression of his anger. He deliberately drew his gun as the purser finished his denunciation. "I'm not goin' to insult ye by askin' ye if this is true, miss," he said to the girl. "I know he's lyin' without your tellin' me. I——"

The girl was clutching his arm; struggling to get at the gun. "Don't, Joe! Don't hurt him!" she begged. "It's all a mistake. Let him go. It's just a mistake, Joe. Don't hurt him!"

Vinton slipped the gun back in the side pocket of his jacket. "Oh, all right," he said, with a forced laugh. "I wasn't goin' to hurt him, anyhow. Just wanted to scare him. Yes, that's all."

He moved toward the door, but stopped for a moment as he passed the purser. "Come on outside," he said, in a voice that he tried unsuccessfully to make casual in tone. "Come on outside. I want to speak to you a minute."

His manner and tone of voice told his purpose as clearly as though he had avowed it in words. The girl dropped to her knees and held out her arms to him in supplication. "You're going to kill him," she said. "You are! I know it! Don't, Joe! Don't!"

But Vinton's anger was beyond control of any entreaty of hers. The girl stumbled to her feet, and cried out: "All right, it's true, then! It's all true; every bit of it! Everything he has said is true. I know him. I've known him for five years! Now will you let him alone?"

The completeness of the silence that followed was as startling as a loud and unexpected report of some sort would have been. Vinton's voice, hoarse with a strange mixture of emotions, broke it:

"You're sayin' that so's I won't hurt him! You don't mean it! You're sayin' it so's I won't hurt him!"

"No, I'm not. It's true, I tell you. It's all true; but there's more. Listen, all of you! I'm Sam Marsh's daughter. I did work the liners with him for five years. Dad took me out of the convent where I was brought up when I was eighteen and taught me the game. That's all true; but there's more. Dad died in Sydney when I was twenty-three. That's two years ago. As soon as he died, I cut all the old crowd and turned straight; but everywhere I tried to get a start somebody turned up that knew me, and I'd have to move. Mrs. Walden hired me in San Francisco to go with her as her maid on a cruise to Japan, and this beast was aboard as head steward. He knew me, and threatened to tell. He made my life a nightmare the entire time I was with the Waldens. Then came the wreck. I woke here after I was rescued to hear Joe saying that he was sure I was 'a lady'; and I grabbed at the chance his mistake offered. Oh, boys, I've been square with you! I've helped you, nursed you, sympathized with you, advised you! I need help now. Wherever I go some one will always turn up that knew me when—when dad was alive; and it will be the same thing all over again. Forget this and give me a chance here, will you?"

There was a long, uneasy silence on the part of the crowd. At length one man spoke, half ashamed, half sullen: "I—I reckon we ain't carin' a lot about a woman that—that'd lie to——"

Vinton's fist stopped his mouth with a sudden blow that laid the fellow, bleeding and dazed, on his back among the legs of the crowd behind. "I reckon 'we' ain't goin' to have a whole lot to say for a little spell," he said, very quietly, facing the crowd. "Not while I'm two-legged an' healthy 'we' ain't!"

I know ye for the ornery bunch o' low-down, ungrateful insults to four-legged dogs that y'-all are, 'cause I'm one o' ye myself, but——"

He turned to the girl and spoke very clearly, very humbly. "I ain't no better'n the rest o' these dogs, miss, only—only I been lovin' ye. I been lovin' ye ever since I picked ye up out there in the water; an' I reckon mebbe 'cause I have I savvy what you're talkin' about. I ain't much good. I talk rough, an' I am rough; but I reckon I'm lovin' ye right gentle. I got enough for an orange ranch back in God's land where I come from; an' if you'll come with me ye can live straight, an' there won't nobody bother ye about movin' on, miss; not while I'm healthy they won't."

The girl came to him and put her hands on his shoulders. "Joe," she said earnestly, "if I go with you, will you believe that I've always—loved you, Joe? That I'm not doing it because I'm in trouble? That I would have gone before this if you had asked me?"

"I reckon I ain't sorry to believe that, miss. Get your things together, an' we'll hit this boat for—for home!"

The girl reached for her cloak and

threw it about her. "They're all together, Joe," she said.

"Then we'll be goin'."

He piloted her through the crowd that silently made a lane for them, and out the door. On the threshold he paused and looked back. "I would like the fun o' moppin' up the floor with you ornery bunch o' pop-eyed skunks," he said slowly. "But I reckon I can afford to pass that up now." He pointed to the purser, and continued: "I'll remark to the captain that you got a hunch to stay here an' go prospectin' an' ain't comin' aboard again, so ye needn't bother to come down to tell him about it."

He turned and walked out and down the hill with the girl on his arm. They stopped for a few minutes at Vinton's shack, and continued on down to the steamer. A short time after they went aboard, the little vessel drew away from the dock to describe an arc and point her bow to the southward; and as the stern lights of the steamer crept out of sight around the island, a number of very human beings stood in front of a dismal store in a lonely camp and watched with shamed, regretful eyes.



BACK TO THE SOIL!

Samuel G. Blythe, who writes articles on politics, the styles in women's clothes, and the art of getting thin, owns a ranch in Montana near the Yellowstone Park. Out there the people call him Farmer Blythe.



THE AUTHOR OF HIS OWN MISERY

George Fitch, who writes feelingly about experiences with 22-caliber motor boats, knows whereof he speaks, for he owns one and loses his temper over it every thirty minutes.



THE PRIZE MIDDLE NAME

James K. Hackett, the champion matinee idol of the United States, has a middle name which he does not brag about and which staggers the pronunciation abilities of all his friends. It is Keteltas.



INNOCUOUS DISSIPATION

Fred S. Hogue, publisher of the San Francisco *Post*, is one of the best checker players in the United States. Whenever he wants relaxation, he disappears mysteriously into some haunt where his fellow players congregate, and uses up four or five hours on the checkerboard.

At the Sign of the Black Bear

By Gardner Hunting

Author of "A Hand in the Game," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST PART.

In the alley behind the Wentworth Building, which housed the great fur establishment of Blinn Ladly, shots are heard by Norman Belfax, a young artist, protégé of Ladly. He reports the matter to Ladly's friend, Ballard (who tells the story). In the alley they find Ladly's hat with a bullet hole in it. There are bloodstains but no signs of a wounded man. Ladly is found missing, and Jeremy Clearing, the detective, is called in. He questions Gervail, Ladly's manager, and fiancé of Miss Mildred Ladly; but Gervail can throw no light on the mystery. Ballard and Belfax are also in love with Mildred. Belfax is horrified to discover that there are bloodstains on his coat and shirt, but professes to be unable to account for them. With Belfax and Ballard, the detective drives to the Ladly home. Mildred is prostrated, but the servant, Matthew, admits that Belfax visited Mr. Ladly the day before, and that he went away very angry. When the detective and Ballard return to the cab they find it empty. Belfax has disappeared!

(In Two Parts—Part II.)

CHAPTER V.

I DO not know why that taxi driver was so stupid. I suppose he was alarmed at our manner; in the light of the tragedy that every one knew had befallen the house of the Ladlys that night and feared to be blamed for some fault on his own part. His reply seemed an age in coming.

"Well, sir," he said at last, "the young feller got out of the cab, saying he was cold and wanted to walk up and down."

"Yes?" insisted Clearing, putting his hand on my arm and gripping me with what I discovered to be very powerful fingers.

"He walked to the corner and back, and then down the other way a piece—two or three times, sir."

"Yes?" said the detective again.

"And then, all at once, he didn't come back," said the man. "I thought——"

"Which way did he go last?" asked Clearing. "He did not seem in the least excited or alarmed now. He was simply quiet and cool, but very prompt with his questions.

"Over toward your left there, sir," answered the chauffeur. "I thought he'd gone around the block, maybe."

"How long ago was that?"

"Maybe five minutes, sir."

Clearing stood quite motionless an instant; then his still eyes came around to me. "Do you know where Belfax lives, Ballard?" he asked evenly.

"Yes," I answered.

"Take this cab and go there. Go around this block first in the opposite direction from that the boy took. If you see him, bring him back here—or, no, take him to the store. If you don't, go to his rooms. If he's there, stay with him and phone headquarters. If he isn't, rouse the people in the house and tell them to look out for him, and phone headquarters if he comes. Give me the address, and I'll send a man to watch for him. Then you go to the store and wait till you hear from me."

I gave him Norman's address and sprang into the cab without a word. We started around the block; and, as the car moved, I looked back to where Clearing had stood. He was gone from the pavement.

I was in greater tumult of mind than before. It looked like flight. Unbelievable as it appeared, the boy had taken his first chance to get away from us. I could scarcely credit it. Nothing

that had ever happened to me had given me so complete a mental upset, and I had no courage to look forward at the meaning of the thing. I sat at the cab window and scanned the pavements while we swept around the four sides of the square. The streets, curiously enough, were empty. We did not meet or see a single soul. When we were again in front of the Lady home, I looked up at its dim windows, sick at heart with fresh sense of horror at our situation. Then, as the cab started away on its run to the address I had given the chauffeur, I leaned back and closed my eyes, with a feeling that it was quite impossible that all these cruel things had happened.

But when we reached our destination, I was awake to realities again. Belfax lived in the studio suite that Mr. Lady had provided for him. He and some of his brother artists had a sort of club together, with a servant or two to look after them. There was a big, general gathering room on the fourth floor, where I had been once or twice with Norman to meet the boys. A string of bedrooms occupied the remainder of the floor, cared for by women who came in for day work from outside. A group of studios was on the floor above, which was the building's top, provided with skylights, north lights, and all the paraphernalia dear to the ambitious artist's heart and necessary to his existence, whether he can paint or not.

Norman's studio was one of the best. It was in the northeast corner of the building, and was a big place, full of an attractive hodgepodge collection of things artistic that ranged from Persian rugs to Jap umbrellas, from jade carving to Vierge sketches. The boy himself was possessed of real talent, and he did more actual work in the place than some of his brother club members. For that reason, the big easels and model stands and clay figures and light screens and huge palettes and brush pots, and all the rest of the things, were for real use, and showed it in their businesslike placing.

I remember very vividly how I raced up the stairs of the studio building that

night, because the elevator was slow in coming to my ring; how I took a hasty look into the club's general rooms on the fourth floor; long enough to get information from the colored man in charge that Mr. Belfax had not been seen this evening; how I ran to the dark bedroom, found it unlocked, and made a hasty survey of the undisturbed bed and big, empty chairs; even of the closet full of neatly hung clothes; how I climbed to the dark floor above and groped my way to and into the big, dim studio, where only the light thrown up from street lamps below upon pale ceiling and glittering skylight furnished any illumination whatever.

A nameless dread was upon me. I did not even try to formulate it. But as I walked in among the easels and things and began striking matches, startling memory of the sensations with which I had previously searched by match light that night—in the dark alley where we first found signs of the murder—took possession of me.

How objects, familiar, or, at least, commonplace, by daylight, take on weirdness and startling strangeness in inadequate illumination at night. Faces stared inquiringly at me from canvases on the walls as my light raised its flickering ray. Figures seemed to move to adjust themselves hastily to position in which to preserve a proper quiet. Shadows seemed to slide away and duck down behind chairs or screens or curtains. Light beams at the dim-glowing windows appeared to wink as with passing shapes. Everywhere movement seemed to be taking place in the exact instant immediately before I looked directly at the spot. I was surrounded with ghostly, rustling, hurrying things, every one of which was motionless the moment my eyes fixed upon it certainly. Nerves? Yes. Perhaps even I had excuse for feeling queer influences after my evening's experience.

I went across the floor to the front street windows—the east light first, simply because they were opposite the door, I suppose. I found an easel with an oil upon it, sketchily blocked in only, so far, as if the artist had left it hur-

riedly at the time his daylight had waned. I found a stool and palette, with paint in little, snaky deposits around its edge, dried on the exterior, still soft underneath. I found a half-burned cigarette, with its ash lying straight away from its tip, showing where it had been laid down lighted and had burned to the edge of its rest and died.

These were signs of the earlier activities of the young occupant of the studio and his friends. Nothing suggesting his presence now, or within a brief time, came to my eyes. I went to a coat closet I knew, and peered inside. No hat or overcoat hung there. I crossed the room again, lighting fresh matches and peering into a model's dressing room. I touched costumes hanging on hooks along the inner wall. Mr. Ladly had provided for the young artist generously. I peered behind larger objects. Why I did not call out I could not have explained for the life of me. I crept about like a thief, quiet, hurried, eager; afraid of finding anything to justify my errand, yet fearful to miss a nook where it might hide.

I had covered most of the possible places in the studio and was approaching the north wall, when I first became aware of sounds that I myself was not making. I heard a board creak under a foot, then a slight scrape, as of a boot sole on a bare floor.

I stood instantly still to listen, and the sounds ceased as quickly. "Hello!" I cried. "Norman, is that you? Where are you?"

There was no answer.

"Norman!" I cried. "It's Ballard. What's the matter? Where are you?"

I fancied I heard the soft rustling of clothing, the sound of a stealthy tread on a rug. Amazed, startled beyond expression, I stepped forward hastily.

"Are you there, boy?" I called. "Why are you hiding? Why did you run away? There's no one after you except in friendly anxiety."

I stopped because the blind shadows would not give up their secret. I lighted another match, with the vagrant

thought popping into my brain that I would make a fine mark for any one who might care to shoot at me; but, throwing off the motion as an absurd mental reaction due to association with the tragic event at the store, I peered out into the darkness, trying to read some sign that would be plain to me, to explain this new, strange thing.

"Who's there?" I demanded at last.

There was no answer. I blew out my match with sudden impulse to strategy. I was sure that some moving, breathing being was there in the shadow at the north, front corner, where I remembered Norman had a couch on which he often took a nap or an hour of reading. If I moved toward the left, I would be between the corner and the easiest access to the studio door. Whoever was there was obviously intent upon remaining undiscovered, and might, therefore, attempt to slip away. Why Norman Belfax should attempt to elude me was past my understanding. But it might not be he who was hiding here.

I moved a few steps across a thick rug and stood still. Again I heard slight movements, indefinable, slow, cautious, it seemed. I wondered if I could be deceived in my conception of another presence. Could a breeze blowing curtains at an open window make such sounds? I waited, silent. I heard the muffled brushing of cloth against cloth, and was conscious that it was in a new position. I felt that the other person, whoever he might be, was creeping across the north end of the studio toward the west wall. I took another slow step or two, and fastened my eyes on the dull, blue-gray space where the north windows were. I might see something there.

I had no notion where the light switch was which controlled the electric lights in the room. I had never been there in the evening, and had not had occasion to look for such a thing. I would have given much for Cunningham's torch or a dark lantern—for any means of suddenly flooding that black end of the studio with light. I could not, for my life, undersand what this

meant, this sneaking game of hide and seek; but the longer it continued, the more suspicious I was of a deadly meaning in it.

And then suddenly I saw a shadow against the long windows. It seemed shapeless at first; but as it moved slowly, carefully, I made out the form of a derby hat, a large, massive head under it; a profile, silhouetted like, of a bearded face. It was there an instant; then it was gone, and I could have sworn it ducked down and farther on toward my left and the west wall. There was no chance to recognize who it might be; but it certainly was not Norman Belfax.

I slipped quietly out of my overcoat and dropped it on the floor. Then I slowly buttoned my under coat, took two more steps toward the wall, and waited. The sounds of movement stopped, then came again, then stopped once more. I stood rigid with expectation, poised for struggle. I thought of lighting more matches—a half dozen in a bunch, that would flare for an instant, at least. But I rejected the idea. There was no light behind me, and I must be well concealed. Such a flash as the matches might make would reveal me far more surely than it could show me this other.

Whirling, half-formed ideas of who and what this prowler might be, whether common thief caught by sheer accident in this place, or some one whose purpose was closely linked with other doings of that night, fled across my brain, while I strove to use every sense I possessed to locate his exact position. No thought of calling aid or making alarm came to me. I am accounted a powerful chap; and it is part of the unconscious conceit of the strong man to forget to depend on others. My wits I might not trust unassisted to solve mysteries such as had puzzled them to-night; but I trusted my muscles.

But the silence lasted so long, finally, that I must needs force the thing. I acted on sudden impulse at last, crouched and slipped quickly forward, with one hand stretched out to the side

to guard against allowing my quarry to slip past between me and the wall, the other ready to clench or grasp as the earliest demand might require. I drew my breath in long, slow, careful inhalations. Once I thought I detected a slight, fetid, sickening odor of some drug or chemical I did not recognize; but thoughts of oils and varnishes with which I might not be familiar, and which might be on some near-by easel or stand, took away suggestiveness in this. The heavy rug seemed admirably to make my steps noiseless. Only my clothing gave out the whisper of motion.

I came to the end of the rug. I felt its slightly thicker binding under my foot, and stopped. I could see nothing below the sill of the high window, where only the faintest possible relief of the absolute gloom evidenced the influence of stars above and lamps in the front street, in the night outside. I listened again, holding my breath now in tense waiting till lungs and throat ached. Then I slowly brought my left hand around toward the front, my right ready to grapple or strike on the instant. My man could not be more than a few feet from me. He might be within touch. I fancied I felt the very nearness of him, the warmth of him. And then——

My hand came upon flesh—a human face—close, low down, almost near enough for our breath to mingle—a big, hairy, human face!

With response like the explosion of the big gun's charge to the jerk of the lanyard we were on our feet. We clenched. I grasped for the throat of him, and felt the beard oddly, bafflingly in the way. A great, broad hand came feeling, grappling into my face, fumbling for my eyes. A fierce, snarling, throat-whispered curse rasped the still air. A heavy figure crushed against mine, strong, lithe, eager, fierce, with the feel of hard-flexed muscles and big bones in it. And I closed with him, with all sense of other things falling away before the joy of actual, savage, hand-to-hand fight that had come at last out of this night of horror.

I jerked my face aside from the brutal fingers. It was to be no fair battle of fists. It was to be dirt and coward trick and foul maiming. I struck, with bitter recognition that I had a plain brute to deal with. I leaped back, then in again, and swung hard. I reached the hairy beard, and heard the derby hat go cracking against the wall as it gave before the blow. I jabbed fiercely with my left, and felt bared teeth against my knuckles—teeth that cut me to the bone. I plunged at him, and aimed a blow at the heart of him. I clutched again for his throat.

What he did I do not know. He did not reach my eyes. I felt a clawlike scratch across my cheek. A kick came biting against my shin, high up and close to the kneecap. I felt his fingers grasping at me for a hold somewhere, anywhere, in fashion that suggested anything but stand-up man struggle. I felt blood hot upon my face from some wound I had not heeded.

We made, strangely, little noise. I did not realize it till afterward, when I learned how slow were the two or three men in the house to take alarm. We were on the thick rug, and we did not trample about much. I stood and struck and swung. He clawed. I cursed him, and whispered the black charge of cowardice in his face. Twice I reached him, and staggered him, despite the darkness and the blood that seemed to be flowing down into one of my eyes. He gave ground before me, and I rushed him. He stood and met me with a queer thrust. Suddenly I felt the prick of steel through my coat against my breast.

I paused then an instant. He wanted to kill, did he? There was reason for killing? I rushed again, and swung wide and low, and caught him in the short ribs from the side, where bones break and drive inward with knife thrusts of their own when they're hit right. His coats were too heavy for the blow to do the vital trick; but it sent him reeling and gasping out upon the bare floor, where his heels clattered noisily, and one arm, flying high in agony, crashed through the glass above

him and brought a jangling shower of it upon us.

I stepped back to give him a chance. No collision of his with artificial obstacles should give me this victory. I would break him, crush him, and his weapon, too, but by fair play. Perhaps it was a fool's thought; but it is no satisfaction to take a coward's advantage of a coward. I crouched to try and see him again against the light; but he, too, ducked down and disappeared.

For an instant we breathed. I heard him gasping between my own deep-drawn breaths, and I grinned in the darkness as I might have grinned in his face. I tried to dash the trickling blood out of my own eyes. It seemed to be coming from some cut in my forehead, and it persisted. I whipped my fingers across it, as a laborer snaps away the sweat, felt my wind coming strong, and stepped forward.

It was then that he sprang, struck overhand and down upon me with his knife, and sent the blade just past my shoulder and deep into the muscles of my back. He knew knife play. He meant that stab to enter just back of the collar bone and to reach the aorta, an Indian trick; and he must have been able to see me a little to come so close. The stab was like the searing touch of hot iron. I struck at him blindly; the treacherous blood-flow above my eyes shut off what chance I had to catch him fair. I found his shoulder only. And luck was with him, for, as we crashed together, the rug slipped under my foot, and I felt myself falling. Next instant I crashed to the floor.

CHAPTER VI.

The least I expected when I went down was that I should get a savage kick in face or ribs. More likely still, I thought, he would drop upon me and drive his knife home in every yielding spot he could find in my body. But he did nothing of the kind. Whether he believed his overhand stroke had reached a vital spot, or was merely satisfied to have me momentarily down, I do not know. He took instant advan-

tage of my slip to leap around me and run a dodging, scrambling obstacle race for the door.

I heard him go past me on the bare floor. I heard him strike against an easel, crash into a chair, and nearly fall over a little stand. But I heard him reach and open the hall door and slam it after him. And then all was still.

I suppose the servants and the two or three artists downstairs were so used to scuffling rackets in the house as to be slow to take notice. Certainly they showed no signs of coming to investigate. I heard no steps on the stairs, nor shoutings, nor any other indication that there was the slightest interest in our fracas. I picked myself up quickly from my ignominious position, listening the while for the sound of my escaping enemy. But he must have run softly, indeed, after he closed the studio door. I did not hear him.

Who and what the man might be was a blind puzzle to me; but that here was an unsuspected link in the chain of events that underlay that night's surface appearances I did not doubt. I found another match, and began immediate search for the light switch, for which I should have looked at the first. I had to stop twice to wipe the blood from my eyes; but I found the thing and flooded the studio with light. Returning to the scene of our battle, I looked hastily about for signs that would reveal the purpose of this vicious prowler, while I felt the warm blood flowing also down my back. I picked up a fallen tripod sketching easel and a spilled pot of brushes. I straightened the rug and scanned the floor. All I could find were a few drops of blood, probably my own. I inspected the broken window, then walked along the north wall of the studio toward the corner where the couch was.

I believe I had no forevision of what I was to find. It came to me with a shock that was like a crashing blow, when I suddenly became aware that something, some person was yet in the room—that some human being was lying, white-faced and still, stretched out upon the couch in the corner.

How my eyes first saw the figure and what thoughts leaped into my mind I cannot tell. I know that I abruptly found myself staring between an old suit of armor and a swivel bookcase that shielded the corner from me, and seeing a slender, limp, boyish figure prone and apparently lifeless. And in less time than I can write it, I was beside him, and knew him for Belfax.

He was as white as I had seen him earlier that night. His eyes were closed, his bloodless lips parted. His hands lay limp and open beside him. His hat was gone; his silky hair, wind-blown and disheveled, lay across his forehead and to his very lids. There was suffering in his face, drawn brows, tense muscles about the mouth; a hint of convulsive struggle indefinable. He was quite unconscious.

I was down beside him quickly, with my fingers searching for the jugular and my eyes seeking the faintest sign of wounds. No fresh blood marks were on him, no cut or bruise that I could see or feel as I ran my hand over his head. If that savage enemy with whom I had fought had been the boy's foe, too, he had at least made a clean job of this piece of work.

I felt no pulse in the big artery nor in the wrist; I could detect no respiration. I whirled instantly, to act first and think afterward. I was about to run wildly and summon aid, to call a doctor, when I saw on the little table, close by the bookcase, a thing that made me stop and quiver with sick terror. A tiny bottle, labeled in red, with the horrid death symbol garishly pictured upon it, lay uncorked and empty there.

The hideous suggestion of suicide and the reason for it leaped full-grown into my mind. It made me stop and stand helpless for one long, awful instant while I faced the unbelievable thing. Norman? Could Norman Belfax, this delicate boy, whose life had been made of gentle things, have conceived and carried out any such deed as that which had crushed our happiness and plunged us in a fog mystery that night? If not—why this thing that now lay before me? If so, how had he endured even

so long the awful strain and burden of murder on his uncalled heart?

These and multitudes of lesser questions swept away the impulse to hurry for the aid that looked to be useless at best. I stood still beside him with the thing wringing my very soul. I had believed in him as I had believed in my own heart. I would have pledged my life that he was innocent. I would have given it, I think, to save him, though such pledge sounds like empty mouthing when it comes too late.

I was shaken to the core of my being, and groping for a hold on something safe and sure and true and clean, as I stood looking at this boy, whom I had believed as free from evil passions as any human being I had ever known, and reviewed the evidence against him, with this frightful cap sheaf to break the stanchest friend's believing heart.

But I waked from the shock as the still slowly trickling blood from my cut forehead again began to blind me. There was a telephone on the window ledge; and next instant I was calling a near-by hospital, while I stood with tilted head to keep my vision clear. I got a prompt reply, and immediate promise of doctor and ambulance. Then I called the police headquarters, left hasty word for Jeremy Clearing. After that I turned to do what little I might understand how to do for the boy.

He was still in my big, old desk coat. It had fallen back and away from his breast. The telltale stains on collar and shirt front showed dry and brown now, but still significant comment on this his present condition and all the catastrophes of our terrible night.

Frantically I fell to examining him again. He was warm; and warmth surely hinted there might still be life where my uninformed observation had failed to detect it. I ran out and down to the big room below, broke in upon a laughing, unconcerned group of boys, and sent them flying for more doctors and druggists, and for whisky and black coffee, half understanding the principle of first aid after the deadly narcotic, the name of which the little, empty bottle

bore. Then I went back to my boy again.

The half hour that followed was almost busy enough to drive from my mind the very fight that I had had in the dark with the mysterious intruder. When doctors and ambulance came, I asked hurried questions of the servants and the youthful artists who had been all the evening in the house. And I learned nothing, for the earlier visitor in Belfax's studio had found as little difficulty in entering, evidently, as I had. What had been his purpose, who he was, what relation he bore the boy, where he had gone, were alike mysteries. I racked my brains to remember a big, bearded man who could be Norman's enemy. I ranged my whole acquaintance before the bar of my suspicion; and not one fitted the part of this chap who had knifed me and escaped.

A young surgeon shook his head with a puzzled frown over Norman Belfax and over the laudanum bottle by his side. He examined him swiftly, and shook his head again, while my heart sank hopelessly. Then he began to act, applying measures I shall not attempt to recount, and answering my eager questions almost with monosyllables. The boy was not dead. It looked like a desperate poison case. There was no telling whether he could be saved. Yes, he must be taken at once to the hospital. Of course, it was *always* worth while to put up a fight for a life.

There was no comfort for me in what he said, and less still in the sight of the stretcher and the solemn procession downstairs to the ambulance. And when he was gone—with a young, clean-faced chum, who volunteered to accompany him, I gave heed to the second doctor who had been summoned, and who had been at me to let him attend to my own wounds. But I had no heart to care whether my hurts bled or dried as they pulled cut coats and saturated shirts off my back, and found use for the needle there and for stiff surgeons' plaster on my forehead. The youngsters stood about in awed silence while I told briefly the story of what had happened in the studio; and then

they spread to look the building over and to start the police after the chap who had run away.

It was just as the doctor got me fixed up as well as he could for the time, and was advising me that it was close to one o'clock in the morning, and that I'd better take a cab for home and leave the rest of the night's work to others, that Clearing himself walked suddenly and quietly into the midst of our little group.

Long, bony, gray fellow that he was, his appearance was like the coming of the ghost of those happenings at the store. Quiet, cool, unexcited, alert, he was the sanest man for emergency I have ever known. He listened to our tale, told as succinctly as I could manage it, with dozens of exclamatory interruptions from boys, who were coming freshly in and who had been brought to the studio by the rumors in street and building. When the detective understood it all, however, he hardly made a comment. He merely turned his quiet eyes from one to another of us, and asked the doctor a question.

"Can Mr. Ballard have one more hour out of bed, doctor, without serious injury?" he asked.

The physician was a young man, just a bit impressed with responsibility and authority. He hesitated.

"Feel fit to go to the store with me once more, old man?" asked Clearing of me.

I insisted that I did. I was sore in the cuts I carried, but I could not think of anything but the still blank, tragic mystery that hung over us. Of course I would go. So the doctor gave consent; one big cub of a boy found a nightshirt and sweater to take the place of my blood-soaked upper garments, and a motor was hastily called. It was when the taxi door slammed between us and the sympathetic and eager boys on the pavement that Clearing opened in a way that made me forget my hurts.

"Ballard," he said, "we'll put our hands on the murderer to-night!"

I gasped. "Then Belfax——" I began, and stopped, hoping against hope.

"Belfax, poor chap, is no killer," he responded quietly. "If I mistake not"

—very gravely—"he did not kill himself. If he dies, there's been double murder done to-night. We'll hardly have time to go into all the details till we get to the store; but I want only one more link of evidence, and I'm ready to reach for my man."

I whispered a name to myself in the darkness of the cab's interior. "Do you mean that he was the chap I caught in the studio?"

"If he wasn't, then there are two made in the same mold."

"But this thug who knifed me was as hairy as Esau!" I exclaimed.

"Just so," said the detective.

"Then I'm all at sea," I told him. "My suspicion is not asleep, but I'm not so near the truth as I thought I was."

"Well," said Clearing, "it's been cleverly and audaciously done. He's played the game with the limit off. But he had everything to lose and everything to win."

I set my teeth on the question that pressed at my lips. He would tell me if he chose. I almost feared to know. I feared even to have the dark suspicion that had haunted me verified. Rage swelled high in me over Clearing's assurance that one man had committed two crimes that night; and I knew that if I should face him, it would go hard to wait for real proof and legal penalty. I thought of my beloved employer, my friend murdered, of the gentle boy now lying at the edge of death, if not already beyond the reach of hands that could pull him back to life; of the stricken girl, upon whom crushing sorrow had been visited with such awful suddenness. I knew that the passion for revenge, elemental and brutal as the instinct is, burned in me. Reprisal, not punishment, would be the thing that would tempt me. And throughout the short ride I sat struggling with the fever in my veins, and to hold my thoughts in leash till I knew that I had the upper hand of animal ferocity.

We reached the police-guarded store again at last. As I got out of the cab and glanced up at the building, I saw the office windows aglow high up and under the platform where the black

bear held his lonely vigil; and I found my very hands a-tremble. Clearing looked at me as we stood by the cage awaiting the elevator in which little Jimmy Quirk was still manfully holding his place.

The detective smiled slightly. "Got it curbed now, have you, old chap?" he asked.

I could not grin back at him, and his still eyes looked at me with real sympathy and liking in them, in curiously strong and clear expression.

"Don't forget," he said, "that such a man doesn't deserve a man's death."

We went up swiftly. Jimmy vouchsafed the information that Gervail was in the office, and that he had come in but a little while ago with the news that the murderer had been found. I started anew at this; but Clearing simply assented sadly; and, when Jimmy looked at me with mingled curiosity and pity in his eyes, I knew what story he had heard. The police had the report of what had happened at the studio.

We crossed the sixth floor, dark but for a dim, rear light and the glow over the offices. I kept behind the tall, calm man who was swiftly becoming my friend. I was content now to let him act—him and the righteous power of the law through him. We entered the door of Blinn Ladly's room, and found Morris Gervail and Officer Cunningham together.

They both turned to look at us quickly. Cunningham looked first at Clearing intently, and Gervail looked at me. I saw instantly that he had been hurt. His face was bruised and cut, and, when he opened his mouth, I saw that two of his front teeth were missing.

"Well, where in the name of the saints have you been?" he cried out at me. "I've been looking everywhere for you. But I suppose you've heard the news?"

I stared at him. "You're hurt," I said.

"Yes," he snarled, with impatient brevity. "Tipped over in a taxi." Then he suddenly grinned at me. "And you?" he asked.

"We've heard that you've found

the murderer," Clearing interrupted. "Where is he?"

Gervail's dark, bruised face took on a heavy gravity. "Norman Belfax committed suicide an hour ago at his studio in Carrington Street. It is equivalent to a confession."

He glanced at me again quickly. Then he spoke. "It's pitiful, Ballard," he said. "It's awful beyond words! I can't understand how he could do it—nor how he did it, for that matter. But the blood marks on his clothing and his foolish excuses, and the unfortunate fact that he quarreled with Mr. Ladly yesterday, had already convinced me. The only mystery now is as to what became of the body."

There was a hint of triumphant satisfaction in his tone that spoke little of grief; and I believe I hated the man at that moment as I have hated few men in my life. If he was really convinced that Belfax had killed Blinn Ladly, his manner was explainable; but I felt anew the conviction that the boy was innocent as I looked into the man's black eyes. I blurted it out.

"I found Norman Belfax in his studio myself," I told him. "He may die as the result of poison, but he did not commit suicide any more than he committed the murder. He is a victim of the same devil who killed Blinn Ladly, and who will swing for it before the year's out."

Gervail stood quite still, regarding me with wide, puzzled eyes. "Well," he replied, "if that's so, I hope he does swing; but your laudable partisanship for Norman has led you astray, I fear. You say *you* found Belfax?"

"Yes," said I, "I found him."

But Clearing broke in upon me. "Wait, Ballard," he said. "This farce has gone far enough now. He's covered his hands with blood and sewed himself up in evidence. Whether we can hang him or not remains to be seen. We can't till we have absolute proof of his victim's death."

Gervail stared. "What do you mean?" he demanded belligerently.

"Put the handcuffs on him, Cunningham," said the tall, gray detective,

drawing an automatic pistol from his pocket. "If he resists, I'll shoot him with perfect delight, as I would shoot the head off a snake."

I grasped the edges of Blinn Ladly's desk, and held to my grip on myself, that I might say or do no unworthy thing. Gervail staggered back, and his white-skinned face, on which the bruises showed as purple spots, now turned ghastly. I heard the handcuffs click as big Cunningham obeyed his order with a grin on his wholesome Irish face. Then Clearing stepped across, and, with incredibly quick motion, slipped his hand into the prisoner's overcoat pocket, and flipped something out of it. He smiled at me as he tossed upon the table an exceedingly well-made black false beard.

But at the same instant some small, shining thing fell clattering on the hardwood floor before the fireplace, and lay glittering there. Clearing stooped, picked it up, and looked at it an instant. Then he laughed briefly.

"Ha!" he said. "Here's the last link, of which I spoke, Ballard. There's only one remaining mystery now, as you say, Mr. Gervail. That is, what has become of Blinn Ladly's body? Oddly enough, however, even you—you the would-be double murderer—even you don't know that!"

CHAPTER VII.

Gervail stood showing his broken line of teeth, like a wild beast at bay, for the first moment or two. Then he sat suddenly down in his chair and looked over at us with a coldly savage gaze.

"I do not know from what sort of insanity you are suffering," he said slowly; "but it will be the costliest piece of aberration you can imagine."

"Cunningham," said Clearing, "if you will turn up the sleeves on his left wrist, you'll find a bandaged arm. Under the bandages, you will discover a series of little red-and-blue marks that may have bled a bit on his shirt. You are as hopelessly caught, Mr. Gervail, as if I had stood here and watched you

put the cyanide in the glass of wine you brought Mr. Ladly."

Gervail scowled fiercely; but his eyes widened, also, and his color fled utterly out of his face, even from his neck. Clearing fixed his cool eyes on the other. Slipping his hand into his pocket, he drew out an odd, tiny object, and held it up. It appeared to be a small cork, with an ordinary pin thrust through it, and a shred of some fabric, that seemed much blackened and burned, clinging about the head of the pin.

"Ever see this before, Mr. Gervail?" he asked. Gervail looked at it as if fascinated, but scorned to reply. Clearing allowed himself his little ghost of a smile. "Well," he went on, "you've played a pretty clever game, Mr. Gervail, but you still have several things to learn. One is, not to despise the intelligence of people about you. Another is, that inanimate things are capable of crying out with evidence against the murderer, and that the man who undertakes to try to warp natural appearances to cover his guilt must have a wide knowledge, indeed, of natural law. For instance, he must know not only that human blood can readily be told from animal blood—oh, you knew that, Mr. Gervail! I say the criminal must have more than a little knowledge. He must know that blood which does not quickly coagulate on exposure to air will necessarily attract the serious attention of a man who possesses real knowledge. He must know that cotton twine will leave a paler gray ash than soft coal, and that a tightly rolled antiseptic bandage will be very likely to keep its shape and betray its nature when hastily burned and left unbroken."

I was listening, absorbed. Cunningham attended with an appreciative grin. Gervail sat with his head thrust forward, a black scowl on his face, his jaw set, and the color coming back slowly into some portions of his white-skinned face. Just at the moment the telephone on Mr. Ladly's desk rang. I answered it, and a gruff voice asked for Detective Clearing. He took the receiver and bent quietly over.

"Yes," he said. "Oh, yes. I see. Yes, I understand. Well, well! I see." A considerable series of remarks and comments on the information he was receiving, but conveying no hint of its purport to other listeners. Presently he hung up the receiver and turned again to his prisoner.

"Mr. Gervail," he began again, "when a man kills his fellow man, or tries to, all nature appears to turn against him to make it impossible for him to keep his deed secret. A man has to be pretty big to fight all nature. You're not big enough."

He glanced at me, and motioned to me to sit down. I took a chair not far from the now dead hearth and before our big black bear; but I was impatient of the interruption, and looked up again eagerly.

"When I saw the blood on the stones in the alley," said Clearing, "I noticed at once the peculiarity I have mentioned. I arrived some time after the shots which Norman Belfax heard were fired. If Blinn Ladly's blood had been shed at that time, it would have commenced at least to coagulate before I looked at it. There was so little sign of thickening in that sanguinary trail across the alley that was meant to end so blindly in the shed, that I was—well, let us say curious. When I saw the bricks, where the powder flash of a pistol had left its mark upon them just under the fire escape, I was—more curious still. A bullet fired as close to the wall as that bullet was fired, could never have hit a man standing even a foot away from the base below; and it's a curious thing, but the stone coping at the bottom of the wall is wide enough to prevent a man's standing closer than a foot from the wall. Also, though possible, it seemed extremely improbable that a bullet fired from above would penetrate a man's forehead, through his hat, at exactly the bottom edge of his hatband."

"There were two shots," interrupted Gervail suddenly.

Clearing paused and toyed with the shining trinket he had picked up from the hearth, but which he held so covered

that I did not know what it was. He made no direct answer.

"Also," he went on, after a slow, measuring glance over Gervail, "powder does not burn much at a distance of ten or twelve feet. Neither does a penetrating bullet tear at the point of penetration when it strikes anything that offers solid resistance. Blinn Ladly's hat was both burned and torn, and when I saw it, I was instantly satisfied that it had not been farther than a fraction of an inch from the pistol's muzzle when the shot that made the hole was fired; and that neither Blinn Ladly's nor any other being's head had been in it. I began to be positively interested."

He smiled at me as I bent forward eagerly. But he shook his head at me as I started to interrupt.

"Now, the little, cheap gun found on the cobbles had two exploded cartridges in it. It looked as if that was the gun that was fired twice in the alley last night. It was not. That pistol was fired once. Only one of the two empty shells had been recently fired. If I mistake not, we shall find another gun somewhere, with a vacant chamber or a freshly soiled barrel. But that's immaterial. I began to look rather closely at things in the alley, and saw several that Mr. Gervail did not notice apparently. For instance, I found this."

Again he held up the cork with its impaling pin.

"I found, besides, a cigar butt, still wet from human lips and with a part of a burned name band on it. It is the cigar much affected lately by two members of the office force. Also, I noticed that there was lime dust, somewhat damp, on the floor of the shed where the blood trail ended. I regarded with some curiosity the fact that, while Mr. Gervail, who came down to the alley just after my arrival, did not then actually step into the shed, there were traces of lime on his shoes. Also that there was a little white line of it in the seam at the edge of his long black coat, where a corner might have touched the ground had he had occasion to stoop. It's been brushed out since, you see; but it was there at six-thirty or so."

Gervail tried to sneer again. It was not very successful. "Trivial circumstances!" he cried. "I can——"

"Wait," commanded Clearing quietly, but so authoritatively that the other stopped. "I came up here to study a bit, and I found a black thing like a spool in the fire. You saw it, Ballard. Examination led me to a conclusion as to what it was—a charred but unbroken roll of antiseptic-gauze bandage. Beside it was a tracery of gray ash that looked like a yarn skein, where cotton twine had been burned. It struck me as odd that any one should burn a quantity of common cord and a bandage when such capacious wastebaskets were at hand. Also it seemed queer that distinct traces of lime lay on the rug, particularly about Mr. Gervail's chair, on the window sill, at the coat-closet door—in addition to those about the entrance there. I began to reconstruct what had occurred in this office."

I remembered suddenly the earlier surprising reconstruction of one scene that he made for my benefit, and began to understand.

"I was sure that Blinn Ladly had not been murdered in the alley back of his building. I was rather well satisfied that the blood trail, hat, and gun down there were all part of a fake trail; and that, if Mr. Ladly had been murdered at all, it had been somewhere in his store or offices. I managed to be alone up here for a while, and I looked about considerably. I found cyanide of potassium in Mr. Gervail's desk."

Gervail swore suddenly and loudly. "Of course you did, you fool!" he said. "I use it in photography."

"Exactly what I expected you to say," said Clearing. "Cyanide is a useful drug. It is also a deadly one, and its presence in a man's desk is, at least, suggestive in the event of a mysterious death." He regarded Gervail gloomily. "It is still more so when one finds fresh crystals of it spilled on the mahogany and a wine-wet drinking tumbler smashed in the bottom of the wastebasket."

The tall detective rose from his chair and walked across to Gervail. "Look!"

he said, pointing to traces of fine white crystals at the edge of the desk blotter. "Pretty careless, Mr. Gervail."

He pointed also at the rug by the chair and at the window sill. "Lime," he said succinctly. "You tracked it up here, Gervail, after you laid your damnable false blood trail in the alley and shed down below."

"You lie!" said Gervail suddenly.

"Pft!" returned Clearing. "Now let's see that arm, Cunningham!"

He had taken hold of Gervail's sleeve with one hand. His other rested suddenly on the manager's shoulder. With a quick movement, he drew the sleeve and cuff back halfway to the elbow, and exposed a forearm covered well down toward the wrist in tightly drawn bandage.

Gervail leaped to his feet. With a catlike movement he raised his manacled hands to strike the detective in the face. But Cunningham caught the up-raised arms and whirled him about so that the blow failed. Then he sent the prisoner into his chair with a push that made the casters jump crashingly on the floor. Clearing grinned down at the ugly black eyes.

"It was human blood in that trail in the alley, all right, Gervail," he said; "but it wasn't Ladly's. It was yours."

He held out his hand before us and opened it. In it was the glittering trinket that had been jerked from Gervail's pocket with the false beard. It was a hypodermic, with a cruel, large needle attached. He picked up a clean, white blotter from the desk and tapped the tip of the big needle on it. A single drop of red came out and stained the white surface.

"It is still unthickened," he remarked. "It was rather severe self-punishment to draw blood from your own wrist with a hypodermic and squirt it about on the stones down in the alley; but it promised to be effective. Didn't it, Gervail?" he asked.

Gervail was sitting very still now. The pallor had returned to his face. The hard, masterful lines about his eyes seemed to have fallen a bit in angle. It gave his face a strangely wilted look.

He made no pretense at an answer to the other's remark.

"Well," said the detective, turning to me, "I can tell you briefly now what has happened here to-night. Do you remember what we said about motives early this evening? It looked, at first glimpse, as if Morris Gervail had no possible motive for the murder of Blinn Ladly. Engaged to marry his daughter, who would be heir to practically all his property; manager of his business, with a reputation for ability proved; with a business and social career mapped out for him that any chap might well envy, and with a generous gift, as recent as night before last, in shape of a check for five thousand dollars—one would think Morris Gervail had no reason for putting out the life of Blinn Ladly. But"—he glanced across at Gervail again—"he had every reason that a black heart needed. Day before yesterday, Blinn Ladly discovered that Gervail was a cheat and a thief!"

The man in the manager's chair jerked with a nervous spasm, as if he were suddenly past bluff but not beyond amazement at this detective's grasp of the truth about him.

"Gervail has been systematically robbing his employer and benefactor; systematically deceiving him about other people around him; systematically defaming friends of the family, and plotting ruin for any one by whose loss he could gain. He plotted yours, Ballard. It was because of that, I have learned, that Norman Belfax was at Ladly's day before yesterday, and left after what appeared to the servants to have been a quarrel. He went to defend your reputation, Ballard, from calumnies that Gervail invented."

I started up from my chair. "My reputation! At Ladly's?" I cried.

Clearing smiled. "Belfax set it right," he said. "In fact, Belfax is at the bottom of this whole affair. It was he who first gave Mr. Ladly a hint of what manner of man Gervail really is. It happens that a certain old Hungarian artist occupies a studio in the same building with Belfax, and young Norman has been kind to him. They were

out walking together one day and met Mr. Gervail. It happens that Vanning, the artist, once lived in the same Hungarian town with our crafty manager here, and remembered him very well, indeed. He also remembered exceedingly well the young wife Mr. Gervail deserted when he left suddenly for America to avoid arrest and prosecution for a jewel theft."

Gervail's head began to sink. His black eyes shifted from one to the other of us, then fixed themselves doggedly straight before him.

"Belfax waited to secure confirmation of the story before telling any one. Meantime, Gervail, for a reason of his own, had used innuendo, and cleverly made havoc with Ballard's reputation in Mr. Ladly's family till Belfax happened to find it out. He set right part of the misunderstanding day before yesterday, and told Mr. Ladly the truth about the clever devil he had as manager of his business. It was because Mr. Ladly asked Mr. Gervail for the facts last night that Gervail decided to turn murderer."

I looked across at the man with sudden realization of the treachery he had nursed. It was beyond my imagination to picture the heart of a being who could turn on such a friend as Blinn Ladly and kill him. His reviling of me before Ladly and before Mildred paled in heinousness beside that black crime.

But Clearing was smiling broadly as he watched my face, and I looked up at him, startled. "What is it?" I asked.

"What happened was this," said the detective slowly. "Mr. Ladly gave Mr. Gervail a chance to get away from the city without exposure. He allowed him three days' time and gave him five thousand dollars, on the man's promise to go back to the deserted wife and take care of her. But Gervail preferred to have the Ladly fortune, which would come to him by marriage with Ladly's daughter after Ladly's death. So Gervail thought of his cyanide bottle, and spent twenty-four hours in faking up a trail.

"He worked his plan out carefully so that, when it came to execution, it went swiftly. He bought a cheap re-

volver, loaded it with five cartridges and one exploded shell. It was an old-fashioned, hair-trigger affair. After dark last evening he suspended it, by a cord wound around the trigger, so that it hung just under and swung against the bars of the first-floor fire escape. The cord he doubled so that the pistol hung from its loop, and he extended it, as doubled, all the way to the sixth-floor back windows, and fastened there. Then he got Mr. Ladly's hat, put a pin through it from the inside, just at the bottom of the band; then he put a small cork on the pin, and stuck the cork in the muzzle of the pistol. Thus the hat was suspended directly from the muzzle of the pistol, so that when the latter should be fired it would blow a hole in the felt, free the pin and cork, and send them flying away into the dark.

"When this simple and effective device was ready—all fixed in five minutes' work along carefully thought-out lines—he went down into the alley with a bottle of blood which he had drawn from his own wrist with the hypodermic and mixed with an agent that prevents ready coagulation. I don't know what he used, but it's simple: one-third its volume of common salt with a little water would do it. So he made his blood trail. He even put a smirch of the stuff inside the hat.

"When all was ready, he came up here, doped up a glass of wine for Mr. Ladly, and put cyanide in it. How he expected to get Mr. Ladly to drink it is beyond me. But that's what he did. Then, when Mr. Ladly drank, he went out to the rear windows and pulled the string. The pull raised the suspended gun against the fire-escape bars, and, when the pressure on the trigger became strong enough, the cartridge was exploded. The trickster either fired, or caused to be fired, another shot from another gun before he fired the suspended gun, so that the sound of the shots and the presence of two empty shells in the revolver might tally and help avert suspicion of the very trick he had played. After his shots were fired, he pulled his doubled string a bit harder, broke it free from the gun, which fell

into the alley. Then he pulled up his string, and came back in here to find his victim and hide his body."

There were points that were still blind to me, of course; but the effect of the recital was to leave me amazed at the ingenuity of the thing. There were loopholes for accidental miscarriage; yes, but it had worked just as it had been intended to do. But for a mistake or two of judgment it would have left a blind mystery behind it. The blood that did not coagulate, the string burned in the grate, the lime on the rug, and the cork with a pin in it. Four insignificant matters, surely. But they had led Clearing to his conclusions. If it were not for the crime itself and the later injury to Belfax, I could have reveled in the solving of the puzzle. As it was, I waited, sick at heart for the final details.

"For the body of his victim," said Clearing coolly, watching Gervail now, "he had devised a curiously excellent hiding place, but one which was not primarily intended for a murdered man." The detective crossed over to me. "Would you mind taking Mr. Ladly's chair, Ballard?" he asked; and I moved as requested, turning to look back in growing astonishment as Clearing pushed my chair aside. When he turned to me again and laughed, in anything but a spirit of solemnity, I could hardly believe my senses.

"Gervail," he said, "you are too clever a man to make the errors you've made to-night. But I'll give you credit for a desperate try. After you saw Mr. Ladly drink your cyanide-loaded wine, you knew he could not live two minutes. You wanted to play your game fast. It demanded speed. So you left him to die while you sprang your trick in the alley. Your first shock came when you returned to this room and found the empty wineglass on the table, but no dead man on the rug. Didn't it?"

He looked with a faint grin at Gervail, whose face was fairly distorted now with fear.

"When you sent Norman Belfax down to the engine room to get your knife, which you had given Talbot to

sharpen, you may not have planned to fasten the murder on him. But when you later found that he had been in the alley at the time you pulled off your little trick, the opportunity was too good to lose. So some time during the hunt in the alley you found opportunity to punch your infernal hypodermic through his overcoat and fill his clothes full of blood underneath. It was the sight of the needle mark in the lining of the overcoat that first gave me the clew to this thing." He held up the instrument.

I got to my feet. I could not hold my peace. "End this suspense, Clearing," I said. "If I hear any more like that, I'll be doing a killing myself."

I meant it. My brain and heart were afire at the assassin for whom no deed was too cowardly. Conviction as to the truth about Norman Belfax's later plight had taken possession of me. But the detective held up his hand.

"Wait, old man," he said. "Let's clear it all up. You fell down in your attempt to implicate Belfax, Gervail, just as you later failed in your attempt to make it appear that he attempted suicide. I know who it was that followed us in a cab to Ladly's and grasped the chance to sandbag Belfax when he got out to walk up and down the block. You took him to his studio, probably pretending to some cabby that he was drunk. You wore your little false beard then, slipped on in the dark somewhere, and acted the good Samaritan part. Then you meant either to make the unconscious boy actually swallow laudanum, or you intended only to make it appear——"

I broke in involuntarily. "Then Norman didn't take the poison?" I cried.

"No," said Clearing. "He was unconscious from a blow on the head—sandbagged. The ambulance surgeon knew it, and half believed you had done it. I have the satisfaction to say that the boy is conscious now, and will be well again shortly. That was the telephone message that came to-night."

I covered my face with my hands and sat still. My brain was whirling. But I heard Clearing going on with his tale:

"When you found no dead man on the office floor, Gervail, you were a bit startled. You may have been even a little afraid. But you played your game out. You had to. You believed Mr. Ladly had rushed away to some momentarily undiscoverable place, and would be found dead somewhere on this floor or elsewhere in the building. This did not agree with your plan; but you had no time to search for him, and you believed that no one could connect you with the crime. You doubtless faked up a story to tell that would make suicide look possible in his case, too. When the evening passed after the alarm, and nobody found Mr. Ladly's body, you were as much mystified as any one. But your hope increased.

"It began to look as if some miraculous accident had aided you. Perhaps the thing that really did occur was miraculous; but I prefer to think it was just a shrewd man's common sense that prevented your finding a dead body on the floor in this office."

He stopped, and I raised my head.

"Look, Gervail," he said. "Here is the hiding place you fixed six weeks ago for a cache for valuable furs you were then stealing, and in which you planned to conceal the body of Blinn Ladly. Good place, too," he added, "for a temporary concealment."

He reached out a hand, with a sudden movement, and touched the breast of the huge black bear before which he stood. As he spoke, a surprising thing took place. The whole under side of the bear's pelt swung out toward us like a door, and revealed a space behind it, where, if I had ever thought of it at all, I had supposed was a solid body of some stuffing material that had filled out the huge animal's skin. The big bear's body was hollow, from head to the hind feet on which he stood, the skin being drawn over an iron frame, evidently most carefully made for the purpose. And inside there was space enough for a man's body—even a commodious space for the body of a man of the size of Blinn Ladly.

I gazed, astounded, as I saw that not only space was there for a hiding place,

but that the space was occupied. And next instant I was staring at a face crowned by bushy, silver hair. And I saw that it was not a dead face at all, but a ruddy, healthy face, albeit grave enough—the countenance of Blinn Ladly himself, alive, sound, and safe.

He stepped out of his snug retreat and looked about at us with a little shrug that I have laughed at many times since as a highly ludicrous comment on his experience. But I saw nothing funny about it then. I sprang to him, and seized his hand and flung an arm about his slender shoulders to be sure he was real and that he was, indeed, unharmed. He was like my own father to me, this friend, and I nearly forgot all the rest in my joy over him; and I could hardly see his kind old face for the blur in my eyes.

But I won't dwell on that. The rest of the story was swiftly told.

"I haven't been in that bearskin ever since six o'clock," said Mr. Ladly, looking at Gervail. "I didn't know there was a hiding place there till I saw you open it while I stood on the window ledge outside. I suspected you of evil intention when you offered me the wine, which you said contained medicine good for my rheumatic trouble. You played innocent well enough to have deceived many people, and I was sorry enough for you to give you the check; but you were too solicitous for my well-being, after the discovery of your perfidy to the wife of your youth and your wicked intention to marry my unsuspecting daughter. So, when I turned to the washstand in the closet, I only pretended to drink your wine. I emptied half of it into the bowl and acted drinking. Then I let you see that the glass was half empty."

Gervail had looked up, white and wretched. His black eyes were fastened on his quondam friend and employer. Mr. Ladly turned abruptly away from him to Clearing.

"I was convinced from his manner that he had attempted to poison me," he went on. "I sat down in my chair and turned to my desk. I put both hands to my head and sat quite still, waiting to

see what he would do. When he spoke to me, I did not answer; and then he got up and ran out into the store. I flung the rest of the poisoned wine into the washbowl and opened the window, to step out on the ledge. It's wide enough to hold a man easily, and I closed the window after me. Gervail came back. I saw his amazement and terror at not finding me. Then I saw his hasty search for me under desks, in the wash room, outside in the outer office. He finally came back, threw his cord and the bandage, about which we've heard, into the fire, and then opened the bear and put his own revolver into it. It was doubtless that pistol which fired the first shot in the alley. Then, hearing Belfax and Ballard coming, he hurried into his hat and coat, and sat down by the window to feign reading.

"I could not hear all that was said between you three when you, Ballard, and Norman came in; but I saw my hat, and understood enough to make me enormously curious. I determined to keep out of sight for a while and let Gervail have all the rope he would take. When you all went out, I climbed inside and went to look into the bear. I found the thing so commodious, partly lined as it is with certain valuable furs we have recently missed, that I made up my mind to hide in it. I found it perfectly possible, and, with Gervail's gun to protect myself, I felt fairly safe. I was careful, however, to telephone to my house while I had the chance, and to warn my daughter of the news she might hear and was not to believe. I think she must have acted a part rather cleverly later, from all I hear, though it's been rough on her, poor child! Then, when I heard Mr. Clearing here, coming from the elevators, I climbed into my bear and let the thing take its course.

"If I had known then who Mr. Clearing was I might have spared him some trouble. But I didn't, and I was so much interested to hear that he was already on the right track toward the would-be murderer, as he showed in his talk with you, Ballard, that I decided to

wait still longer, to learn, if I could, just what Gervail had intended. When you two and Norman went away, Officer Cunningham stayed here so Gervail could not open the bear, even if he had wanted to. When he left, I made my presence known to Cunningham—and startled him some, too, I think." Mr. Ladly laughed lightly, and the big policeman grinned. "But Cunningham told me all that had occurred, and we decided to tell Mr. Clearing that I was safe. So, when he came back here alone, we let him into our secret, and told him a few things; and he went off to hunt for you, Ballard, and for Norman. We couldn't foresee that Gervail would try to get Norman."

"No," said Clearing suddenly. "That was my fault. But I left the boy alone in the carriage for the purpose of showing him my confidence in him. I had no idea that Gervail would try to get him. It was only the chance that the boy chose to take a walk to get warm that suggested to Gervail, who was following us, that suicide fake. Wasn't that it, Gervail?"

He turned to the other quickly. But the would-be assassin was too deep in apathetic despair to show a start. He simply nodded wearily.

"Take him to the station," said Clearing to the officer. "We've done with him here."

"How about that five thousand dollars reward, Gervail?" I could not resist the temptation to ask him.

Mr. Ladly smiled. "Clearing deserves a reward for this night's work, and so do all the others," he said. "I'll see to that, and also to Gervail's check."

He turned to Clearing, who had started toward the door. "We'll see you again soon, Mr. Clearing, I hope?"

"Yes, sir," said the tall detective quietly, "you will;" and he passed out, with the stooped and slinking criminal and the big policeman following him.

Then my employer turned to me. "Tom," he began seriously, "we owe you reparation for accepting the mean suggestions of Gervail against you. I was loath to be influenced by them. Mildred had no fair chance to judge between you; but you will forgive me, won't you, boy? And you will give Mildred a chance to make it up?"

I grasped his small, offered hand in my big one; but I did not speak. It would be easy for Mildred to make it up if she would, and hope leaped. But I thought of poor little Belfax. "Norman?" I said. "The boy loves her, too, Mr. Ladly."

"Puppy love," said my friend, smiling. "Come, we'll go and see him. Then we'll go home to breakfast with Mildred."

THE END.

In the next issue you will get the first part of a splendid two-part story, called "Meanness in the Mountains." It is written by Raymond S. Spears and has plenty of incident and action as well as some vivid pictures of the mountain folks of the South. In the first December POPULAR, on sale November 7th.



POLITICS AND PRAYERS

THE last time "Uncle Joe" Cannon was asked to make a prophecy regarding the outcome of the November elections, he threw up his hands in despair and said he had done with prophesying, adding that he was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. His plight, he said, concerning prophecy reminded him of the old woman and her praying for help when she was in a runaway.

"I prayed to God till the breechin' broke," explained this old lady, "and then I just gin up."

A Chat With You

THIS is supposed to be the age of specialization. Many self-appointed teachers urge us to specialize at some one thing, to neglect all others, and thus to secure a competency for ourselves in our old age. Like most advice of a general nature this has a certain amount of truth concealed in it, but it is well not to take it too literally or run it into the ground. If a man is training as an oarsman he rows every day, but he also takes a long run. No one part of us works at its best unless the other parts are fairly well exercised and well nourished. To be a really fine expert one must be a pretty good, all-round human being to begin with.

FEW of us in our daily work find the variety to make work itself a sufficient recreation. We are generally confined to tasks which use only one set of muscles and one set of convolutions of the brain. In an instinctive desire to secure balance we play in various fashions. Some take to pinochle and domestic cigars, others to bowling, golf, tennis, baseball, a hundred and one forms of physical exercise, and as many more individual hobbies. For the body the recreation taken in the open air is the best kind; and for the mind and soul—you yourself, if you read *THE POPULAR*, are acquainted with the best form of rest and exercise. Games of chance, games of skill are too narrow in their scope. Given the ability to read and write and access to a library or the

current magazines, you have at your command the best there is in the way of general self-culture and recreation.



YOU learn more history, more politics, more general information, more knowledge of men and things from the fiction you read than from all other sources combined. The greatest historians are those who imitate the fiction writers to some extent and allow a creative imagination to play across their pages. The greatest scientific writers are those who can tell the story of the evolution of a new species, the discovery of a new salt, the isolation of a new micro-organism in such fashion that the discoverer seems a romantic adventurer into new and undiscovered countries.



TO read understandingly and with the fullest enjoyment, to give oneself to the tale, to live in it and for the time being forget the duller, irritating world about you is an accomplishment. It will surely save you the strain of useless worry, help you to bear physical ills with more fortitude, save you from many hours of lassitude and boredom, perhaps also from nervous breakdown and doctor's bills. Like most accomplishments it is best acquired in youth. If a man has not acquired the habit of reading for entertainment before he is forty he has missed one of the biggest things in life, and is sure to lead all his days a narrowed existence. Reading the

A CHAT WITH YOU Continued.

daily papers is not enough. At best they present a fragmentary account of important happenings, at worst a dismal record of human misery and crime. You should have one room in your brain shut off from all the rest so that you may retire to it when you want to read. Once the door is closed all manner of things may happen at your will, you may look into men's hearts and read their motives, journey to all the far places of the earth, find beauty under a thousand disguises, know romance without the pain of it, and keep within your heart a lifelong youthfulness.



TWICE a month, we hope, *THE POPULAR* helps to unlock for you the door to this magic room. We can't all take vacations in the flesh, but we can in the spirit, and we are trying to help you to them. We believe it to be a task just as much worth while as running a newspaper or a scientific review. We want to do it well, and we have some able assistance. Bertrand W. Sinclair helps in the issue out two weeks from to-day, with a full-length novel complete in the one number of the magazine. This time he takes you to a ranching country in the Northwest, and presents to you a drama of outdoor life and work. "Shotgun Jones" is the name of the tale. It starts with the strangest of all heroes, a nearsighted cow-puncher who on account of his disability carries a sawed-off shotgun instead of a revolver. Jones finds a fortune in bills stowed away in a cast-off riding boot on the prairie. Jones is an honest man, and wants to find the rightful owner. He is also a practical man, and unwilling to be robbed of the money he has found. We won't tell you his method of securing

it. He doesn't hide it, but finds a better way of saving it. The story has one of the strangest of plots, yet it is told so well, the characters are so real and natural that it seems as if it must have happened. You will say to yourself on reading it that no man could have made up this tale, that it must have happened somewhere, and that Sinclair must have heard of it. It is not a story of bloodshed or sudden death; it has all the excitement and thrill you could wish, but these are secured by finer methods and in a natural and apparently inevitable fashion. To our way of thinking Sinclair's work always affords a splendid example of the truly romantic story. It is told with an art that conceals itself. In your interest in the happenings depicted you forget how it is told. "Shotgun Jones" is as good as any story Sinclair has ever written.



THERE is another complete novel in the same issue of the magazine by Robert Welles Ritchie. It is called "Criminals All," and has for its setting the South Seas, for its principal character one of the men you met in his former stories, and for its subsidiary characters a group of Chinese girls who have been kidnaped by a Chinese merchant who deals in strange wares. It is the story of a voyage in which the ship is navigated by one who knows nothing of seamanship. In addition to being a really good yarn it has a charm of novelty and originality that places it in a class by itself. In addition to these features there are short stories by Charles E. Van Loan, Emerson Hough, B. M. Bower, Rupert Hughes, Theodore Roberts, Frank Condon, and others.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.



How R. L. Thomas

Read this story—just another instance of real success won through I. C. S. help. It tells how R. L. Thomas, of Eureka, California, advanced from ranch hand to City Engineer. It shows what *you* can do through your ambition, plus I. C. S. training:

EUREKA, CAL., Dec. 14, 1910.

STUDENTS AID DEPT.,
I. C. S., SCRANTON.

"It was early in the year 1902 that I first heard of the I. C. S. I was working on a ranch at the time, and in line of my duties, went to help work a ferry-boat during a great storm.

"I spoke to one of the travelers, and he told me that he was temporarily traveling as an agent for a school that taught by mail. This interested me, but we had no time to talk, as a ferry-boat at the high-water stage in Northern California, needs attention, and is not a convenient place to show literature. But he asked me my name,

and said the resident agent would send me information.

"I enrolled, I think, some time in April, 1902, taking a Surveying and Mapping Course.

"In 1908, while Deputy Surveyor for Humboldt Co., California (position secured through I. C. S. training), I drew the plans, got out the stress sheets and bills of material, and made the cost estimate for the steel structure that now spans the river at the same crossing, where that water-soaked, half-frozen and thoroughly miserable man, yelled at me with chattering teeth, through the cutting wind and blinding rain, that there was a school that taught things by mail.

"February, 1909, I was appointed Municipal Engineer for the town of Fortuna, California, and held both positions.

"In July, 1909, I resigned from both of these last positions, to take the office of City Engineer of the City of Eureka, California, to which position the people of the city elected me in June, 1909, and which position I now hold.

"My income has increased about six or seven fold on account of the



Spanned the River

training I received from the I. C. S., and I am just getting started."

Yours truly,
R. L. THOMAS.

You are the engineer of your own career. Span the gap between failure and success by marking the coupon

N-O-W

You, too, can span the gap between a poorly paid job and a position you'll be proud of. The first step is simply marking the coupon opposite the occupation that most appeals to you. Marking the coupon has been the starting point in the careers of thousands of men who owe their success in life to ambition and I. C. S. help.

Mark the coupon today. It costs you nothing to do so. You assume no obligation. The coupon will bring advice and information that will clear the road to success for you.

You can succeed, just as surely as did R. L. Thomas. But **you** must make the first move. You must show the I. C. S., by marking the coupon, that you **have** ambition—then the I. C. S. will show **you** how you can turn that ambition into dollars and cents.

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Box 821 SCRANTON, P.A.

Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark **X**.

Electrical Engineer
Elec. Lighting Supt.
Electric Car Running
Electric Wireman
Telephone Expert
Architect
Building Contractor
Architectural Draftsman
Structural Engineer
Concrete Construction
Mechan. Engineer
Mechanical Draftsman
Refrigeration Engineer
Civil Engineer
Surveyor
Mine Superintendent
Metal Mining
Locomotive Fireman & Eng.
Stationary Engineer
Textile Manufacturing
Gas Engines
Automobile Running

Civil Service
Railway Mail Clerk
Bookkeeping
Stenography & Typewriting
Window Trimming
Show Card Writing
Lettering & Sign Painting
Advertising
Salesman
Commercial Illustrating
Industrial Designing
Commercial Law
Teacher
English Branches
Good English for Every One
Agriculture
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Plumbing & Steam Fitting
Sheet Metal Worker
Navigation
Languages
Chemist

Spanish
French
German

Name _____

Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

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THE SMOOTHEST TOBACCO

Made of the finest Burley leaf that grows—mellowed to perfection—a rare smoothness—and a flavor which gives the utmost enjoyment.

Velvet is too smooth to irritate—almost too good to be true—but one dime will convince.

You will certainly like it!

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Liggitt & Myers Tobacco Co.

**10¢ TINS, Handy 5¢ bags—
or one pound glass
humidor jars**

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International Correspondence Schools
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\$25-\$50 Weekly**

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FIRST LESSON FREE—WRITE FOR IT NOW

Send postal at once to: *The Original Auto School*

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Owners—we supply competent men

White Valley GEMS

Substitutes
for Diamonds



Send for FREE Catalog!

showing wonderful White Valley Gems in Rings (Ladies' or Gentlemen's), Scarf Pins, Studs, Brooches, Necklaces, Cuff Buttons, Lockets, Earrings—100 different articles and styles.

Not glass, not paste, not any kind of imitation, but **beautiful, splendid gems**. (White Sapphires chemically produced.)

Look like finest diamonds. Will scratch file, and cut glass. Stand acid test. Famous society women substitute White Valley Gems for real diamonds—or wear the two together confidently.

14 K. solid gold mountings. 25-year Guaranty Certificate with each gem. Ring measure sent with catalog. Will send any article in book C. O. D.—express prepaid—subject to examination—or by registered mail on receipt of price. Money refunded if not satisfactory.

WHITE VALLEY GEM CO.
508 Saks Bldg. Indianapolis, Ind.



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Look and Wear
Like
Diamonds



A Marvelous Synthetic Gem Not Imitation

—the greatest triumph of the electric furnace. Will cut glass—stands filing, fire and acid tests like a diamond—guaranteed to contain no glass. Remoh Gems have no paste, foil or backing—their brilliancy is guaranteed forever. One-thirtieth the cost of a diamond. These remarkable gems are set only in 14 Karat Solid Gold Mountings.

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—your money cheerfully refunded if not perfectly satisfactory. Write for our 4-color

De Luxe Jewel Book—yours for the asking. Address

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maintains his store at considerable expense. He must pay for help, rent and lighting. He carries many articles that you would never dream of ordering direct from manufacturers, and is, therefore, of great service when you need a newspaper, a cigar or a box of stationery. Then why not give him all of your custom and so help make his business profitable?

Tell him to show you samples of AINSLEE'S, POPULAR, SMITH'S, PEOPLE'S, NEW STORY and TOP-NOTCH magazines. Select those you want and he will gladly deliver them to your residence regularly.

Then, when you want something good to read, you will not have to search for it.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York

Delhi Diamonds



Sent to You FREE!

Positively free. The wonderful Delhi diamond, the marvelous triumph of the electric furnace—a genuine synthetic gem. The only true rival of the diamond—guaranteed to contain absolutely no glass. Looks and flashes like a standard white diamond. Guaranteed to hold its brilliancy forever. Cuts glass. Fire and acid or a file won't hurt it. Guaranteed to contain no paste. No artificial backing. Set in solid gold mounting. Worn by leaders of society and great actresses. One thirty-fifth the price of diamonds. Sent now on approval for your inspection without one cent of money on this special offer. Don't think of investing in a fine jewel until you learn about Delhi diamond, the wonderful alchemic diamond. The only stone that flashes like a diamond. Write today and get full particulars of this amazing limited offer.

Send No Money

Not a cent. Just send your name and get particulars. Get our astounding prices. Don't obligate yourself to buy, see this marvelous gem before you think of buying. We pay all the express charges. See it for nothing. If it is not more brilliant than you ever dreamed, we will take it back at our expense. No obligations to you at any time. Send a postal card or a letter today for our amazing low prices.

Limited Offer—To all who write promptly we will send this special limited offer. Amazing prices on Delhi diamonds—a stone to be proud of. Write for full description of this wonderful synthetic gem. Your name and address brings all particulars and promptly get our special limited offer. Send today. Do it now **Delhi Diamond Co., Dept. 5193 Chicago, Ill.**



WE INVITE EVERY THIN MAN AND WOMAN HERE

**EVERY READER OF THIS MAGAZINE TO GET
FAT AT OUR EXPENSE**

This is an invitation that no thin man or woman can afford to ignore. We'll tell you why. We are going to give you a wonderful discovery that helps digest the foods you eat—that puts good, solid flesh on people who are thin and under-weight, no matter what the cause may be—that makes brain in five hours and blood in four—that puts the red corpuscles in the blood which every thin man or woman so sadly needs. How can we do this? We will tell you. Science has discovered a remarkable concentrated treatment which increases cell growth, the very substance of which our bodies are made—a treatment that makes indigestion and other stomach troubles disappear as if by magic and makes an old dyspeptic or a sufferer from weak nerves or lack of vitality feel like a 2-year-old. This new treatment, which has proved a boon to every thin person, is called Sargol. Don't forget the name—"S-A-R-G-O-L." Nothing like it has ever been produced before. It is a revelation to women who have never been able to appear stylish in anything they wore because of their thinness. It is a godsend to every man who is under weight or is lacking in nerve force or energy. If you want a beautiful and well-rounded figure of symmetrical proportions, of which you can feel justly proud—if you want a body full of throbbing life and energy, write The Sargol Company, 4012 Y Herald Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y., today and we will send you, absolutely free, a 50c box of Sargol that will prove all we claim. Take one with every meal, and in five minutes after you take the first concentrated tablet of this precious product it will commence to unfold its virtues, and it has by actual demonstration often increased the weight at the rate of one pound a day. But you say you want proof! Well, here you are. Here is the statement of those who have tried—who have been convinced—and who will swear to the virtues of this marvelous preparation.

REV. GEORGE W DAVIS says:

"I have made a faithful trial of the Sargol treatment and must say it has brought to me new life and vigor. I have gained twenty pounds and now weigh 150 pounds, and, what is better, I have gained the days of my boyhood. It has been the turning point of my life. My health is now fine. I don't have to take any medicine at all and never want to again."

MRS. A. I. RODENHEISER writes:

"I have gained immensely since I took Sargol, for I only weighed about 106 pounds when I began using it and now I weigh 150 pounds, so really this makes twenty-four pounds. I feel stronger and am looking better than ever before, and now I carry rosy cheeks, which is something I could never say before."

"My old friends who have been used to seeing me with a thin, long face, say that I am looking better than they have ever seen me before, and father and mother are so pleased to think I have got to look so well and weigh so heavy 'for me'."

CLAY JOHNSON says:

"Please send me another ten-day treatment. I am well pleased with Sargol. It has been the light of my life. I am getting back to my proper weight again. When I began to take Sargol I only weighed 138 pounds, and now, four weeks later, I am weighing 153 pounds and feeling fine. I don't have that stupid feeling every morning that I used to have. I feel good all the time. I want to put on about five pounds of flesh and that will be all I want."

F. GAGON writes:

"Here is my report since taking the Sargol treatment. I am a man 67 years of age, and was all run down to the very bottom. I had to quit work, as I was so weak. Now, thanks to Sargol, I look like a new man. I gained 22 pounds with 23 days' treatment. I cannot tell you how happy I feel. All my clothes are getting too tight. My face has a good color and I never was so happy in my life."

MRS. VERNIE ROUSE says:

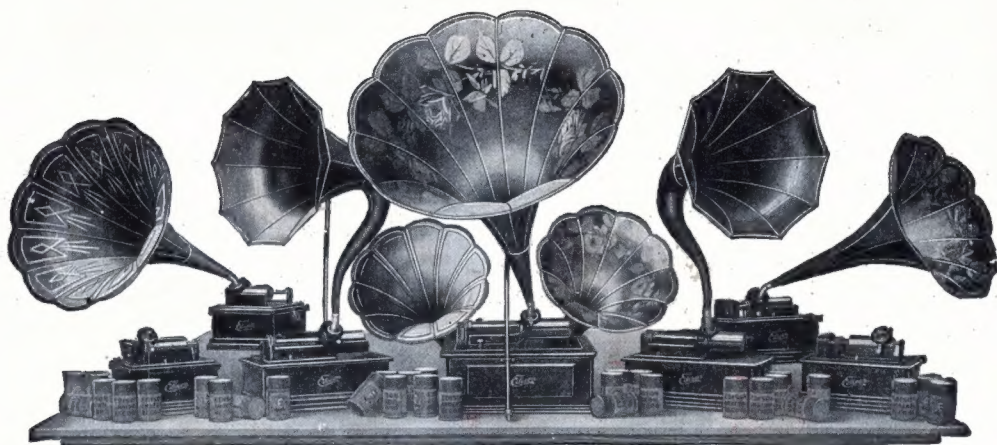
"Sargol is certainly the grandest treatment I ever used. It has helped me greatly. I could hardly eat anything and was not able to sit up three days out of a week, with stomach trouble. I took only two boxes of Sargol and can eat anything and it don't hurt me and I have no more headache. My weight was 120 pounds and now I weigh 140 and feel better than I have for five years. I am now as fleshy as I want to be, and shall certainly recommend Sargol, for it does just exactly what you say it will do."

You may know some of these people or know somebody who knows them. We will send you their full address if you wish, so that you can find out all about Sargol and the wonders it has wrought.

Probably you are now thinking whether all this can be true. Stop it. Write us at once and we will send you, absolutely free, a 50c package of the most wonderful tablets you have ever seen. No matter what the cause of your thinness is from, Sargol makes thin folks fat, but we don't ask you to take our word for it. Simply cut the coupon below and inclose 10c stamps to help cover the distribution expenses and Uncle Sam's mail will bring you the most valuable package you ever received.

COME, EAT WITH US AT OUR EXPENSE

This coupon entitles any thin person to one 50c. package of Sargol, the concentrated Flesh Builder (provided you have never tried it), and that 10c. is inclosed to cover postage, packing, etc. Read our advertisement printed above, and then put 10c. in stamps in letter to-day, with this coupon, and the full 50c. package will be sent to you by return of post. Address: The Sargol Company, 4012 Y Herald Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y. Write your name and address plainly, and **PIN THIS COUPON TO YOUR LETTER.**



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FREE

Mr. Edison Says *"I want to see a phonograph in every American Home."*

For the phonograph is Mr. Edison's pet and hobby—the machine in which he takes a wonderful pride, because he knows of what immense value it is to have this wonderful entertainer in the home with its variety of entertainment for young and old, who gather there in the evenings.

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I will send you the New Model Edison phonograph—also your choice of the Edison Amberol records on an absolutely free loan. There is no obligation—no deposit, no guarantee nor C. O. D. to us whatever. I want you to hear all the waltzes, two-steps, vaudevilles, minstrels, grand operas, also the sacred music, etc., by the world's greatest artists. Entertain your family and friends. Then—when you are through with the outfit send it back—I will pay the freight.

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I am tremendously proud of this new instrument. When you get it in your town I know everybody will say that nothing like it was ever heard—so I am sure that at least some one—if not you then somebody else—will buy one of these Edison (especially as they are being offered at the most astounding rock-bottom price—and on terms as low as \$2.00 a month).

Perhaps you yourself will be glad to keep the outfit. But even if nobody buys, I'll be glad anyway that I sent you the new Edison on the free loan—for that is my way of advertising its superiority.

Get the New Edison Catalog

We will send you our handsome new Edison book and the full particulars of our wonderful free loan offer absolutely free and prepaid. You should see our grand new Edison book. It will give you the list of thousands of records and all the machines that you have to choose from. Write today—don't delay. Get the free book and learn all about this wonderful free trial offer. Send your name and address on a postal card or letter if you wish, but the coupon is handier.

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Without any obligations on me, please send me your great Edison Catalog, and also full particulars of your wonderful free loan offer on my choice of a new style Edison.

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Address.....

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"Now Watch Her Wake Up"



Kellogg's has opened the eyes of many. The doubts of the skeptic give way when the first taste is taken. It is different--there's no question about it.

The Kellogg flavor and the Kellogg plan of selling the goods are responsible.

Every package of Kellogg's goes from the ovens to the cars the day that it is made. It is constantly moving until it reaches your table.

And the grocer buys only what he needs, because he can get no lower price on a car-load than he does on a single case.

Kellogg's never loses its freshness by standing in musty warehouses.

That's one big reason why it's always good.

This signature is on every package of the original.

W. K. Kellogg